LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
MAR 22 1920
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Division BX9836
Section .M16

PUBLICATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

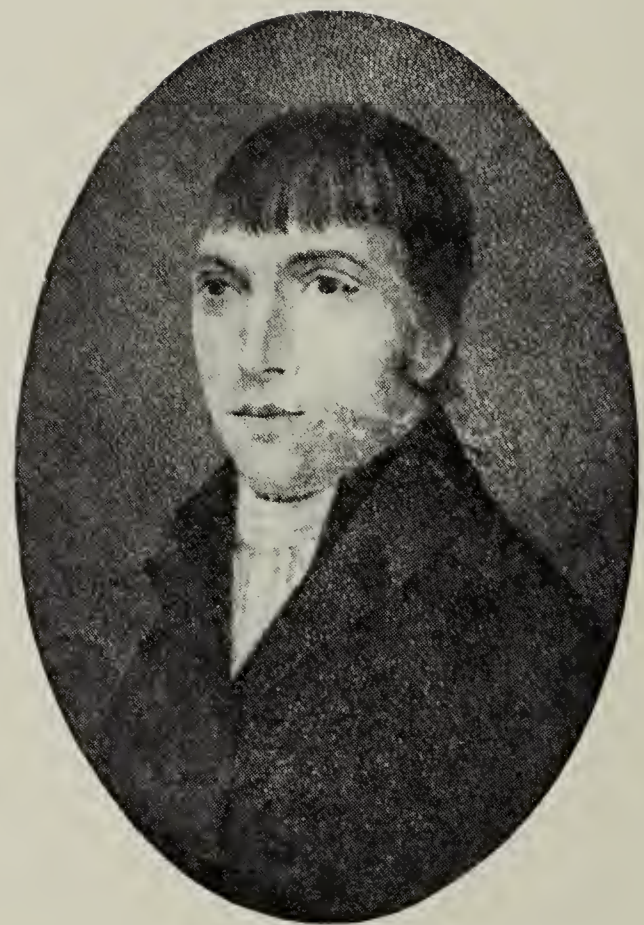
HISTORICAL SERIES

No. XXXIII

THE METHODIST UNITARIAN MOVEMENT

Published by the University of Manchester at
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS (H. M. McKechnie, Secretary)
12 Lime Grove, Oxford Road, MANCHESTER

LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.
London : 39 Paternoster Row, E.C.4
New York : 443-449 Fourth Avenue and Thirtieth Street
Chicago : Prairie Avenue and Twenty-fifth Street
Bombay : 8 Hornby Road
Calcutta : 6 Old Court House Street
Madras : 167 Mount Road



JOSEPH COOKE

Frontispiece

THE METHODIST UNITARIAN MOVEMENT

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
MAR 20 1920
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BY

H. McLACHLAN, M.A., B.D.

LECTURER IN HELLENISTIC GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

MANCHESTER:
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
12 LIME GROVE, OXFORD ROAD
LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.
London, New York, Bombay, etc.
1919

PUBLICATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

No. CXXIII

IN PIAM MEMORIAM

PATRIS

(1842-1899)

Deinde patres quidem carnis nostrae, eruditores habuimus,
et reverebamur eos

PREFACE

THE religious and political history of a few societies of simple folk in North-East Lancashire makes up the Methodist Unitarian Movement, which, as the title suggests, owed its origin and, as the story shows, its power to a singular combination of piety and rationalism. No great names are to be found amongst its leaders; none who have been noticed in any ecclesiastical history or, with one exception, in any biographical dictionary. Except by their connection in certain ways with Chartism and Co-operation, the members of the Methodist Unitarian societies hardly came into contact with the political and religious forces of the first half of the nineteenth century. Yet, apart from the light it sheds upon various chapel histories, the writer trusts that the record of these humble pioneers of religious and political liberty amongst the Lancashire hills is one that deserves to be rescued from a threatening oblivion.

To Mr James Whitehead, late Secretary of the Todmorden Education Committee, warm thanks are tendered for the generous loan of MSS. relating to the society at Todmorden.

For valuable assistance in deciphering documents and identifying sites, acknowledgment is gratefully made to the Rev. John Evans, B.A., of Rochdale, and the late Rev. T. J. Jenkins, of Newchurch—ministers respectively of the first two societies established by Joseph Cooke after his expulsion from the Methodist Conference.

The chapel authorities at Rochdale. Newchurch, Padiham, Todmorden, Rawtenstall and Oldham are also heartily thanked for the kind loan of blocks.

H. McLachlan.

Manchester, *July*, 1919.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Joseph Cooke	1–30
II.	The Cookites (1811-1818) . .	31–48
III.	The Methodist Unitarian Movement (1818-1837)	49–71
IV.	The Methodist Unitarians (1838-1858)	72–83
V.	The Discipline of the Methodist Unitarians	84–99
VI.	Methodist Unitarian Sunday Schools	100–111
VII.	The Social and Political Ideals of the Methodist Unitarians . .	112–139
	Bibliography	141–144
	Index	145

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Joseph Cooke . . . *Frontispiece*

I. John Ashworth . . } *facing page* 16
Providence Chapel, Rochdale }

Bethlehem Chapel, Newchurch *on* „ 21

II. James Taylor } . . *facing* „ 34
James Wilkinson }

III. James Pollard } . . *facing* „ 36
John Robinson }

IV. Oldham Meeting Room . *facing* „ 46

Lord Street Chapel, Oldham *on* „ 48

Clover Street Chapel, Rochdale *on* „ 50

V. Richard Wright } . *facing* „ 54
Rawtenstall Chapel }

VI. Meeting Room, Padiham } . *facing* „ 62
Nazareth Chapel „ }

Unitarian Meeting House,
Todmorden . . . *on* „ 65

VII. John Fielden . . . *facing* „ 122

THE METHODIST UNITARIAN MOVEMENT—1806-1857

CHAPTER I

JOSEPH COOKE

The Methodist Unitarian Movement of the first half of the nineteenth century deserves more notice than it has commonly received at the hands of historians of English Nonconformity. No biography of its founder has been written, and no attempt made to trace its origin and development during the period of its independent existence. Partly this is due to the fact that the movement was outside the main stream of Unitarian history, partly to the character and situation of the societies of which it was composed.

Methodist Unitarianism owed little to the aggressive propaganda of Priestley and his school, whose determinist philosophy it deliberately rejected. It was still less indebted to the Liberal Independents and Arian Presbyterians of the eighteenth century, whose distaste for doctrinal preaching evoked little sympathy from the enthusiastic Methodist missionaries of Unitarianism. Again, the enlistment of laymen in the ranks of the ministry, the poverty of its members and the establishment of societies in hamlets and villages far removed from large centres of population emphasised the isolation of the Methodist Unitarian Movement, and tended to preserve it apart from the organised Unitarianism which, at the beginning of the last century, inherited the prestige

and traditions of a cultured and opulent Dissenting interest. Yet this Movement gave birth to vigorous churches at Rochdale, Newchurch, Padiham and Todmorden ; by it the congregation at Rawtenstall was converted from " High " Calvinism and given a fresh lease of life, the Oldham Unitarian Chapel, in the days of its decline, was fostered and maintained, and the seeds of Unitarian Christianity were first planted in Burnley, and in various villages throughout north-east Lancashire.

Joseph Cooke, the founder of the Movement, was born of Methodist parents in the neighbourhood of Dudley, Worcestershire, on the 8th May 1775. The precise place of his birth is unknown. There is no record of his baptism in Dudley, and the earliest testimony is uncertain—" at or near Dudley."

Of his education little is known. According to the belief of John Ashworth, his friend and follower, it was " not what is generally esteemed a learned one." In his writings he exhibits no acquaintance with the Biblical languages, or, indeed, with any other than his native tongue. An opponent, who knew him intimately, when controverting his views in 1807, triumphantly quoted the Greek of the New Testament, contemptuously referred to Cooke's exegesis of the English version and begged to remind him that " the sacred writers did not possess an English dictionary."

Having passed through the experience known to Methodists as conversion, Joseph Cooke became a local preacher whilst still in his " teens." So acceptable were his services that at the age of twenty he was taken on trial as an itinerant preacher by the Conference held at Manchester in 1795, under the presidency of Joseph Bradford. He was appointed third minister at Redruth, a small town in Cornwall, where was one of the strongest societies in the country.

It was the famous year in the annals of Methodism when the Plan of Pacification was issued. By it Methodism was finally severed from the established Church,

since it recognised that Sacraments might be administered by persons authorised by the Conference, and that Methodist services might be held during the same hours as the services of the Church of England. These concessions were, however, hedged about in a remarkable way. It was decreed that " the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered in any chapel except a majority of the Trustees of the chapel on the one hand, and a majority of the Stewards and Leaders belonging to that chapel on the other hand, allow of it," and " in all cases the consent of the Conference shall be obtained before the Lord's Supper be administered." The denial by the Plan of the right of laymen to representation in District Meetings and in the Conference led, two years later, to the ejection of Alexander Kilham from the Conference and to the foundation of the Methodist New Connexion.

The agitation which preceded and followed this schism must have left its mark on the mind of young Cooke. His co-operation with laymen in the organisation he formed later was grounded, doubtless, on a recognition of principle not less than on reasons of expediency. It is also significant that services at the two most important Cookite chapels were held at 10.30 A.M. and 2.30 P.M., whilst before 1795 it was the rule, and for long afterwards the common practice, to hold Methodist services out of Church hours. As for the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, Methodists were very slow to accept its administration save at the hands of episcopally ordained clergy. " At Queen Street Chapel, London," we are told, " the preachers were set aside, and a clergyman, sometimes one imprisoned for debt in the Fleet Prison, was secured to administer the holy ordinance." There were " cases in which no service was held in Church hours, and some where the Sacraments were not administered as late as 1870." [1] Amongst the Cookites, on the contrary, even the local preachers administered the Communion—a

[1] *History of Methodism*, p. 386, note 2.

function not even now exercised by laymen in the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

In 1796 Joseph Cooke was removed to Penzance and in the following year to St Austle. The fourth and last year of his probationary period he spent at Burslem. In 1799 Joseph Cooke was admitted into full connection as a preacher of the Gospel, and again stationed at Burslem.

There is no evidence that he ever laid claim to the title of "Reverend." In 1813 the *Selection of Hymns* published by his followers is said to be by the late Rev. Joseph Cooke; and John Ashworth, four years later, wrote of him in the same way. Not, however, until 1818 was the prefix "Reverend" authorised amongst Wesleyan Methodists, whilst the ordination service was not established until 1836. Under the portrait prefaced by Cooke to his own works, published in 1806, stands the simple description, "Mr Joseph Cooke," and in 1815 he is formally referred to in the same style by the Trustees of Newchurch Chapel, who had sat under him as a Methodist minister.

The appointment of Cooke to Burslem was, in a way, a recognition of his promise as a preacher, for at this date Burslem was reckoned one of the most important societies in England. Following a common fashion, not yet wholly abandoned, Joseph Cooke married as early as possible after his official designation as Preacher. His wife was a lady of refined and literary tastes, with strong devotional feelings. During a married life of less than a dozen years she proved herself, in the midst of many trials, the stay and support of her husband. After his death, for some years, she kept a ladies' boarding school at Summer Castle, Rochdale, being assisted, during the latter part of the time, by her daughter. Later she lived in the family of the Rev. Franklin Howorth, then resident at Rochdale, and spent her last days at Fox Hollies, near Birmingham. The first child of the marriage, a son named after his father, was born on 1st July 1800. The record of his registration on 10th April 1807, in

Cooke's handwriting, is the first entry in the register, originally kept at Providence Chapel, Rochdale, and afterwards at Clover Street Chapel, in the same town.

In 1800 Joseph Cooke was removed to the Brecon circuit, South Wales. He took up his residence at Merthyr Tydvil, where, in February, 1802, his second son, named George, was born. As early as 1795 the preachers in the circuits of Brecon and Merthyr Tydvil exchanged once a month. In 1802 the two circuits became one, and Joseph Cooke was appointed to Chester. In August, 1803, at the Conference held in Manchester, under the presidency of Joseph Bradford, Cooke was removed to Rochdale, then a town of about 14,000 inhabitants. The condition of the country at this time is reflected in the *Address of the Conference to the Members of the Methodist Society throughout Great Britain.* It speaks of " the present awful crisis," and adds, " the favourable conclusion of the late Irish Rebellion, of the intended invasion of Ireland by the French at Bantry Bay, and of the mutiny at the Nore, with other remarkable interferences of Divine Providence cannot but be fresh on your minds." " The exemptions and other clauses in the last Acts of Parliament for raising the army of reserve, and for arming the nation at large, which respect the public ministers of the Gospel are peculiarly favourable to the spiritual interests of the people of God." Apart from the exemptions named, Joseph Cooke, then a young man twenty-eight years of age, must have served in the Napoleonic wars, and the Methodist Unitarian Movement might never have been born.

The centre of the Rochdale circuit, formed in 1795, was Union Street Chapel, at which Cooke chiefly ministered. The chapel had been erected in 1793, two years after the death of John Wesley, whose frequent visits to Rochdale had largely contributed to the establishment of Methodism in the town.

Mr George Eayrs has observed of the system of itinerancy that it " helped to secure uniformity in teaching

and administration. The preacher did not remain long enough to impress upon the members his peculiar views or methods." The statement may be true of Methodist preachers in general; it was conspicuously untrue of Joseph Cooke at Rochdale. Even his critics have been compelled to make this admission. One of the preachers who sat in judgment upon him at the Sheffield Conference of 1805 describes him, writing twenty-two years later, as " an acute and subtle young man, extremely pert and self-conceited, insinuating in his manner, pleasing in his address and unwearied in his visits." A hostile reviewer of his first pamphlet, in *The Methodist Magazine* for 1807,[1] gives a more favourable impression of the man. He is portrayed as " a young man of promising abilities, and unimpeached in morals," who " acted uprightly in not professing his assent to doctrines which he did not believe. He sacrificed that Connexion which he loved, and by which he was beloved, for the sake of maintaining what he believed to be doctrine according to godliness. We love the man, while we lament his errors." A Methodist historian,[2] writing in 1880, represents him as " a man of parts given to vain speculations, who led many astray," one " who, by his ability as by the teaching of doubtful doctrine, exercised a degree of fascination among the ignorant and pretentious."

The real character of Cooke's disciples may be learnt from their later progress in liberal opinions. From the concessions of his opponents and detractors we may infer that his friend and admirer sketched, not unfairly, his power and personality. " Wherever he travelled," says John Ashworth, " he gave the greatest satisfaction, so that his fame began to spread abroad. Perhaps there never was a preacher in this country so universally admired and beloved as he was, whilst in the Methodist Connexion." " His pulpit abilities were certainly of the first order, his mind, which was well expressed by his

[1] Pp. 399-445 *ff.*
[2] Wm. Jessop. *An Account of Methodism in Rossendale,* p. 179.

large, quick eye, was comprehensive and penetrating. Often while sitting in the pew before him, I have compared his mind to the keen-eyed eagle, which, discovering his prey from afar, darts upon it, and, there fixing his hooked talons, makes sure of his prey. His articulation was not slow, and scarcely ever too rapid—his voice was clear and pleasant, his style plain and elegant, and in delivery, he was animated like a man who felt what he said." [1]

That Joseph Cooke was a popular preacher was proved by the large congregations he commanded in Rochdale, both before and after his secession from Methodism. His rational and orderly method of pursuing the study of Christian truth brought him, however, to certain doctrinal conclusions, that were denounced by the more narrow and intolerant of his hearers as contrary to the teaching of John Wesley. At Newchurch he was interrogated after service by one member of the congregation, who, when he learnt that the preacher stood by his opinions, promptly declared his intention never to hear him again. At Bacup he was interrupted with the remark: "This won't do; this is not Methodism." But the particular object of attack was two sermons preached at Rochdale in 1805 on "Justification of Faith" and "The Witness of the Spirit."

John Wesley's teaching as to the conditions necessary for salvation was not consistent throughout the course of his career. The "sure trust" and "confidence" which the justified sinner felt that Christ died for *his* sins was said to be produced by the Holy Spirit, and, without this personal assurance, a godly mode of living availed little. Subjective imaginations and emotions were thus constituted the criterion of a state of salvation. Cooke taught, on the contrary, that when a man believes and is penitent, though sorrow still possess him and he is not conscious of God's pardon, he is freely forgiven. This teaching he founded on the later doctrine of Wesley,

[1] *Ten Letters*, pp. 46-67 *ff.*

which amounts to an almost formal recantation of earlier opinions.

In 1807 an opponent, criticising Cooke's doctrine in *The Methodist Magazine*,[1] admitted " that a few expressions might be found in Mr Wesley's voluminous writings which seem to support the opinion that a sense of pardon is not always essential to every degree of saving faith," but pleaded against this the general body of his teaching on this head of doctrine.

A competent and impartial scholar, the late Canon Overton, in his *Life of Wesley*,[2] observes : " In his old age John Wesley vehemently retracted his earlier opinion that such an assurance was absolutely necessary as a proof of salvation." Wesley himself wrote : " When, fifty years ago, my brother Charles and I, in the simplicity of our hearts, taught the people that unless they *knew* their sins were forgiven, they were under the wrath and curse of God, I marvel they did not stone us. The Methodists, I hope, know better now. We preach assurance, as we always did, as a common privilege of the children of God, but we do not enforce it under pain of damnation denounced on all who enjoy it not."

But it was not Wesley the aged whose views were acceptable to the majority of his followers in Cooke's day.

Disputes and contentions, as a consequence, multiplied in the Rochdale circuit ; complaints were made before the District Committee in Manchester, and, at the Sheffield Conference in August, 1805, the first held in that town, Cooke's conduct was formally called in question. Dr Thomas Coke was in the Presidential chair, and amongst other well-known Methodist leaders and contemporaries present were Joseph Benson, John Pawson, Adam Clarke and Henry Moore. What followed is a matter of controversy. A Methodist preacher, present at the Conference, writing twenty-two years later, speaks in the highest terms of the doctrinal discussion

[1] P. 262 *ff.* [2] P. 84.

by these eminent Divines: "The misguided young man, who treated the advice of near two hundred well-instructed Divines with extreme indifference, not to say contempt, in conclusion made a promise to make the controverted topics a matter of close study for one year; but solemnly engaged before us all not to agitate the points, directly or indirectly, in the pulpit or in private, among our people. On this condition we appointed him to the Sunderland circuit. He had not been many weeks in his new station before he violated his engagement with the Conference; he furiously preached, and soon after published his erroneous statements. At the Conference in 1806 we expelled him from the Methodist connection."

The accusation of bad faith was also made against Cooke both shortly before and after his expulsion. The Chairman of the Manchester District, Thomas Taylor, in reply to a letter written by Cooke prior to the Conference of 1806, said: "I have read the sermons with grief, because I conceive it is contrary to your engagement to the last Conference that you have published them." Answering this correspondent, Cooke discussed various points of doctrine he had raised, but made no allusion to the alleged pledge. It is worthy of note, however, that the accused did not hesitate to publish the correspondence in his pamphlet of 1807 entitled *Methodism Condemned*. After Cooke's expulsion Edward Hare, a Methodist preacher, replied to this pamphlet in one entitled *Genuine Methodism Acquitted*. Here was repeated the charge that Cooke had made and broken his pledge to the Conference of 1805. Cooke now met the indictment of his honour in *The Hasty Sentence Arrested*: "You roundly assert that it was contrary to my solemn engagement and in defiance of the Conference that I published my Sermons! When, sir? And to whom? If you can prove that I ever made or was required to make any such engagement in public or in private, verbally or in writing, I submit to be thought a liar for ever. . . . Is there the most distant probability that I

ever should have made, or been required to make an engagement not to publish sentiments, in which I was supposed so perfectly to agree with what was then referred to as the standard, that the Conference determined to send word to Rochdale, and did send word accordingly that they were 'satisfied with the account I had given of my sentiments on the subject of the Witness of the Spirit'? But though nothing was said to or by me about publishing or not publishing my Sermons, I had not at that time the most distant thought of ever making them public."

Dr Gregory, in *The History of Methodism* (1909), thus dismisses the incident: "When in 1806 Joseph Cooke practically denied the Witness of the Spirit, and taught that the faith that justified was in itself meritorious, the Conference remonstrated with him in brotherly fashion, and only required him not to preach his new views. He pledged himself to silence about them, and incontinently broke his pledge. Thereupon he ceased to be an itinerant." [1]

The precise pledge given by Cooke is contained in a letter addressed by him to the President of the Sheffield Conference:

"Sir,—At the request of the Committee appointed to meet me last evening, I most heartily and unequivocally declare to you, that I believe it is the privilege of every Christian believer to enjoy the Witness of the Spirit, as taught by Messrs Wesley and Fletcher; and that all such will enjoy it, unless it be in cases of extreme ignorance or through the influence of particular bodily complaints, or the violence of temptation. But in guarding the doctrine against its abuses by the ignorant and presumptuous, it is not improbable but my expressions may have been too strong, and liable to that misconstruction which has led to this scrutiny. And, therefore, while I think it impossible to believe the doctrine more

[1] Vol. i., p. 415.

cordially than I do, I trust that this business will teach me to be very cautious in my expressions upon this and all other subjects in future.

"JOSEPH COOKE."

Plainly the Conference compromised with Cooke on these terms, pronouncing his views consonant with the standards of Methodism on his promising to exercise caution in the expression of opinion on such controversial subjects. At the same time, for the sake of peace and safety, his term of service in the Rochdale circuit having expired, he was removed out of the district to Sunderland.

The Conference no more suspected that he might publish his old sermons than he intended so to do. The improbability of such action was, to some extent, heightened by the circumstance that the discourses in question, in accordance with Methodist custom, had been delivered extemporaneously. Cooke, therefore, was unconscious of breaking any pledge when, in 1806, he published the sermons preached at Rochdale a year earlier. What induced him to take this step may be stated in his own words: "When some of the preachers were giving it out that I was only on trial for one year, and that there was a person appointed at Sunderland to watch and note my expressions, my friends were grieved at these reports, and thought that I ought, by all means, to publish what I had preached." Consequently Cooke wrote the first of the sermons, and sent it to one of his former hearers, with permission to show it to friends or opponents. There followed a request that he should write the second sermon and permit them both to be printed. "The object of this request," says Cooke, "I believe, was simply to convince my opponents with how little reason they had objected to the doctrine of these sermons, and so to restore peace among those who were contending about them. And as I have not the least doubt but this was the design of those who made the

request, so (God is my witness) it was mine in complying with it."

Cooke's sincerity of motive is evident. He honestly believed, with considerable justification, that his sermons did not contain anything, in his own words, " contrary to those writings which are considered as the standard of Methodism."

His ministerial brethren were of the contrary opinion. At the May meeting of the Newcastle District his sermons were denounced as " unmethodistical," without any descent to details, and a Minute was passed signifying the disapprobation of the assembly. The rule of the Conference provided that when the chairman of a district received any complaint against a preacher, he shall send an exact account of it in writing to the person accused, with the name of the accuser, before he calls a meeting of the District Committee to examine the charge. In vain did Cooke inquire the nature of his offence from the chairmen respectively of the Newcastle and Manchester districts. The one replied that he did not intend to bring any charge of heresy against him, but to hand the sermons to the Conference for consideration, since there appeared to be some things in them on the doctrine of Justification and the Witness of the Spirit contrary to Methodist doctrine. The other, in a kindly note written a fortnight before the Conference, referred to one passage as containing " expressions flatly contradictory to the word of God," and to a second passage as betraying " too high an opinion of the sermon " of which it formed a part. To these points Cooke made a spirited defence. His state of mind at this juncture is reflected in a singularly pathetic letter to a Rochdale friend, dated 27th June 1806:

" I find the great secret of living above the world while in it, is to take truth and honesty for one's guides. These will bear the mind beyond the power of calumny and ingratitude—those two arrows, which fly the furthest, and

wound the deepest, of all that are in the power of man. I cannot say I have not been touched by them, I am not quite invulnerable. But, upon the whole, I am able in patience to possess my soul. What is to become of us, I am not able to foresee. I can hardly think Methodist Preachers will discard me for explaining and defending Methodism. But if they do, I know my cause is with Him who judges righteously. My poor, dear wife feels like a woman, and a mother of four little children, when she thinks of my expulsion ; and, when I see it, I cannot but participate her pain. However, she bears it, upon the whole, like a Christian, and I am thankful."

The Conference met at Leeds in August, 1806, when two hundred and forty preachers were present, under the presidency of Adam Clarke, afterwards famous as a bibliographer and commentator, and destined some years later to be himself the object of censure by the Conference for his rejection of the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

Whether by accident or design, two letters which Cooke had written in self-defence to Messrs Duncan M'Allum and Thomas Taylor, the chairmen of the Newcastle and Manchester districts, were not read to the Assembly. Eight or ten paragraphs of the sermons were read without any comment being made on them. Then, as several preachers deprecated any debate on doctrine, a committee was appointed to converse with the accused upon the subject of the sermons. Cooke acknowledged to the committee that he had taught and still believed that whenever " a sinner returns to God, according to the requisitions of the Gospel, God accepts that sinner, whether he has any comfortable persuasion of it in his mind or not." Next morning he offered to prove what he had taught from the writings of Wesley and Fletcher, but a motion permitting him to do this was overruled by the President's observing that he " might be able to quote a few insulated passages." The

offer of a day's grace for further consideration of the subject was declined by Cooke, since he had no reason to think that another day or week would make any change in his opinions. Thereupon, after a short private deliberation, the Conference informed Cooke that he could not be considered a member of that body whilst retaining his present sentiments. As Cooke believed that scarcely one in ten of those who condemned his sermons had read them, he wrote, a few days later, to the President, begging them to read the sermons, when, he felt confident, they would change their opinion of them. This evoked a reply to the effect that if he expressed himself like his brethren, and suppressed the sermons, a majority might be induced to reinstate him. As such a procedure involved a recantation, Cooke unhesitatingly refused to entertain the proposal. According to the Minutes of the Conference, Joseph Cooke now " desisted from travelling." As no reason was assigned, and the euphemism apparently placed him on a level with preachers expelled for immorality, he protested: " I did not desist from travelling on any account whatever, and never had the smallest desire so to do. The simple and only cause of my expulsion was in my having published two sermons in which my professed object was to roll away unjust reproach from the body to which I belonged, and to make Methodism better understood."

It would have been possible for Cooke to remain in the Methodist Connexion if he had consented to trim his language so as to give the appearance of complete agreement with his ministerial brethren. It was in allusion to an observation by Joseph Benson that he always took care never to seem to contradict Mr Wesley that Cooke composed the couplet:

> " When interest and ease are so closely combined,
> 'Twould be strange if they did not *seem* all of one mind."

In his attitude towards the Conference of 1806 he exercised a Christian forbearance that does him great

credit. In a pamphlet vindicating his doctrine he wrote: "I am by no means disposed to impute to the Conference either that ignorance, or malevolence, which have generally been so conspicuous in cases of persecution. . . . Charity will ever seek to palliate what it cannot approve. . . . Actions, wrong in themselves, may possibly originate in the best of motives. And it is but natural to ask, What, but zeal for truth, could induce them to do as they have done? Admitting this to have been their motive, the reader will see cause to applaud the principle, even though he should be obliged to disapprove its effects."

The action of Joseph Cooke, with all that it involved of hazard for his wife and family, and of toil and anxiety for himself, drove John Ashworth to exclaim: "Either he was insane, or he preferred truth and a good conscience to every other consideration." [1] In the course of the controversy which Cooke's sermons aroused, Edward Hare published three pamphlets: (1) *Remarks on Mr Cooke's Two Sermons*; (2) *Genuine Methodism Acquitted*; and (3) *The Sentence Confirmed.* The first of these was answered by Cooke in *Methodism Condemned by Methodist Preachers*, and the second by *The Hasty Sentence Arrested.* In these pamphlets Cooke is seen to advantage as a student of Scripture and of the writings of Wesley and Fletcher. His style is vigorous and lucid. Occasionally he displays a satirical vein, as when he replies to the criticism that he does not speak sufficiently of Christ and His atonement by asking if it did not serve "to disprove the general remark, which has been made of Methodist Preachers, that whatever be their text, their sermon is the same."

Though in 1806 Cooke was unaware of any decisive break with Methodism, he had adopted a method of inquiry into the nature and authority of religious truth that was bound, soon or late, to prove fatal to the unquestioning acceptance of the standards of the Methodist faith. Nothing indicates this more clearly than the

[1] *Ten Letters*, p. 9.

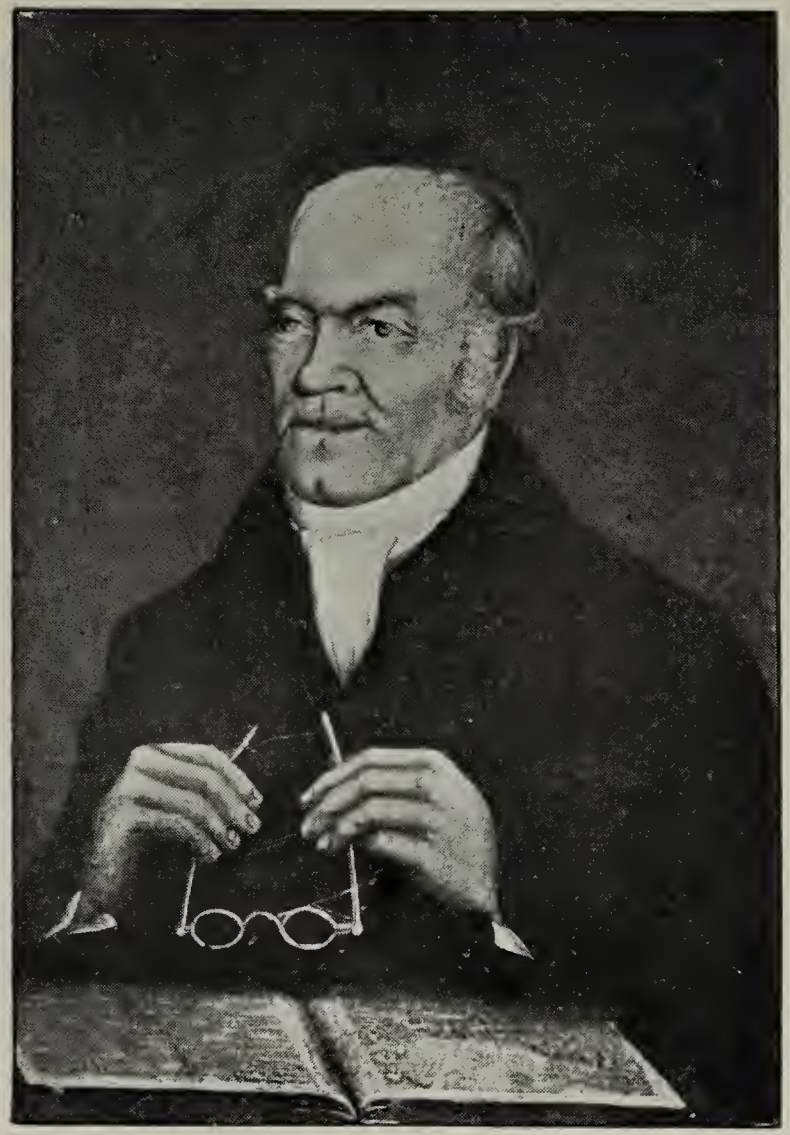
quotation from Dr Jortin, which adorned the title-page of his sermons: "He who is desirous to find religious truth must seek her in the holy scriptures, interpreted by good sense and sober criticism, and embrace no theological systems any further than as they are found consistent with the word of God, with right reason, and with themselves." That way led to Unitarianism. As Martineau said: "The earlier Unitarians, notwithstanding their repute of rationalism, drew their doctrine out of the Scriptures, much to their own surprise, and did not import it into them," whilst John Biddle (1615-1662), "the Father of English Unitarianism," as he has been called, declared that he experienced his first doubt respecting the Trinity in reading the Bible, before he had seen a Socinian book.[1]

If Joseph Cooke did not arrive at Unitarianism in the few years that remained to him, at least he moved steadily in that direction, and the Methodist Unitarian Movement was the logical sequence of the operation of his spirit and the application of his method in the study of the Scriptures. This was apparently foreseen even as early as the date of his expulsion from the Methodist Conference, for one of the preachers present at Leeds in 1806 remarked, some years later, to the widow of Joseph Cooke: "Many of us were afraid that your husband would one day become a Socinian."

After the Leeds Conference Cooke betook himself to Rochdale, where he was received with enthusiasm by a large number of his former hearers, who seceded from the Union Street Chapel. Subscriptions were immediately raised, and in the same year Providence Chapel, capable of holding seven hundred people, was erected in High Street. At the opening service Cooke made a further declaration of the rational and Scriptural principles by which he was animated. "This chapel," he said, "was built and opened, not for the purpose of preaching any system of doctrines taught by any man

[1] *A Retrospect of the Religious Life in England*, p. 221.

Plate I



JOHN ASHWORTH

PROVIDENCE CHAPEL, ROCHDALE

To face page 16

or number of men whatever, but for the purpose of communicating the truths, which, after a diligent and impartial inquiry, may appear to me to be contained in the Scriptures."

Referring to this statement, the historian of Methodism in Rossendale somewhat naïvely remarks : " The direct tendency of the theory which taught every man to walk in his own light was to bring the new society at every step nearer to Unitarianism." [1]

The appointment by the Methodist Conference of three preachers to Rochdale who had previously laboured in that circuit may have been designed to counteract the pernicious influence of Cooke. In spite of their efforts, or, perhaps, because of them, the heretic enjoyed large congregations. It happened that the services at Providence Chapel were held at a later hour than those in Union Street Chapel, and Ashworth relates that one of the Methodist preachers, " prolonging his sermon with the view (as his hearers thought) of preventing their hearing Mr Cooke, saw the greater part of his congregation leave him to finish his long sermon to the few that were left."

At Newchurch-in-Rossendale Joseph Cooke had also many staunch friends and admirers. In a letter written on 30th September 1805 (a month after the Sheffield Conference) to James Pilling, a class leader, whose house had been for many years the home of the Methodist preachers, he thanked his friends at Newchurch for their kindly treatment of him, and subscribed himself " Your most affectionate brother, Joseph Cooke." Chief of these friends was John Ashworth, soon to be Cooke's first officer, and after his death virtual leader of the Methodist Unitarian Movement. A young man of twenty-six at the time of Cooke's expulsion, he was a Methodist local preacher and, according to the testimony of an unfriendly witness, an acceptable one. By trade a woollen weaver, Ashworth was given to study, and made use of a

[1] Jessop, p. 189.

contrivance to suspend a book before him at the loom, so that he could read and weave at the same time. It was in this way, we are told, that he read Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*—a work published in three folio volumes, 1737, second edition, two folio volumes, 1742-1744—now chiefly remembered by Charles Lamb's humorous allusions to its illustrations. Later in life Ashworth became an employer of labour, and a man held in high respect far and wide. For a time he looked with considerable suspicion upon Cooke's innovations in doctrine. He is, almost certainly, the member of the Newchurch Methodist Chapel, unnamed in his letters, who called upon Cooke to defend his position, and admitted himself "silenced though not convinced." Further study of Wesley's sermons, the Minutes of the Conference and the writings of Fletcher convinced him that Cooke was in the right. Henceforth, as he confesses, "his way became rugged and painful."

Summoned before the Methodist Quarterly Meeting, he was examined and admonished in regard to his views on the Witness of the Spirit and on Justification. Yet almost a year passed before the final step was taken, and he, with about thirty more, reluctantly left the Methodist Connexion and formed a society which met in the upper room of a house at Mill End, Newchurch. The room was opened before 21st June 1807, when the first baptism was conducted there by Joseph Cooke.

Cooke and Ashworth exchanged pulpits once a month, and with the help of "one or two more who exhorted" the services were maintained. One of these helpers was James Taylor, of Rochdale, a young man of eighteen, then a fuller and cloth-dresser, who, from conscientious motives, declined to receive remuneration for his services. The ministrations of Cooke and his colleagues were by no means confined to Rochdale and Newchurch. On Mondays and Tuesdays, after his visits to Newchurch, Cooke preached at Padiham and Burnley, and not infrequently at Todmorden, Haslingden and other villages,

in all of which places were groups of people who sympathised with him in doctrinal opinion. The new sect became known by the name of Cookites, a designation which did not disappear after Cooke's death, when his followers assumed the name of Methodist Unitarians.

At Newchurch, the meeting-room quickly proving too small for the increasing numbers of worshippers, the society determined to build a chapel, though, as Ashworth said, "Our numbers were small, our circumstances mean, most of us being parents of large families, and, to a man, we had all to procure our bread by our hand labour."

The character of Rossendalians had changed for the better since John Wesley visited the valley sixty years earlier (7th May 1747), when he wrote: "Here I preached to a congregation of wild men, but it pleased God to hold them in chains."[1] Still the opposition which the new society encountered was vigorously expressed in word and deed. Moreover, the staple trade—the manufacture of woollens, introduced into Rossendale in the reign of Henry VIII.—was in a depressed state, and food was dear. But "Joseph Cooke was a man whose courage always rose in proportion as his difficulties increased." Accordingly, in 1808, a fund was raised for the purpose of erecting a chapel at Newchurch. It was originally intended to build on a site near Mill End, where the meeting-room was situated, and a contract for building there was actually let, but the Cookites were "prevented building" at Mill End, possibly, as at Padiham in 1822, meeting with opposition from bigoted opponents. Consequently, on 3rd May 1808, a plot of ground at Newchurch, opposite the Wesleyan Chapel, was purchased for the sum of £24, 9s., and the contract for building revised on account of the difficulty of carting the materials up the hill.

A *Declaration of Trusts of Surrender*, from Joseph Cooke to James Clegg, James Pilling, John Ashworth,

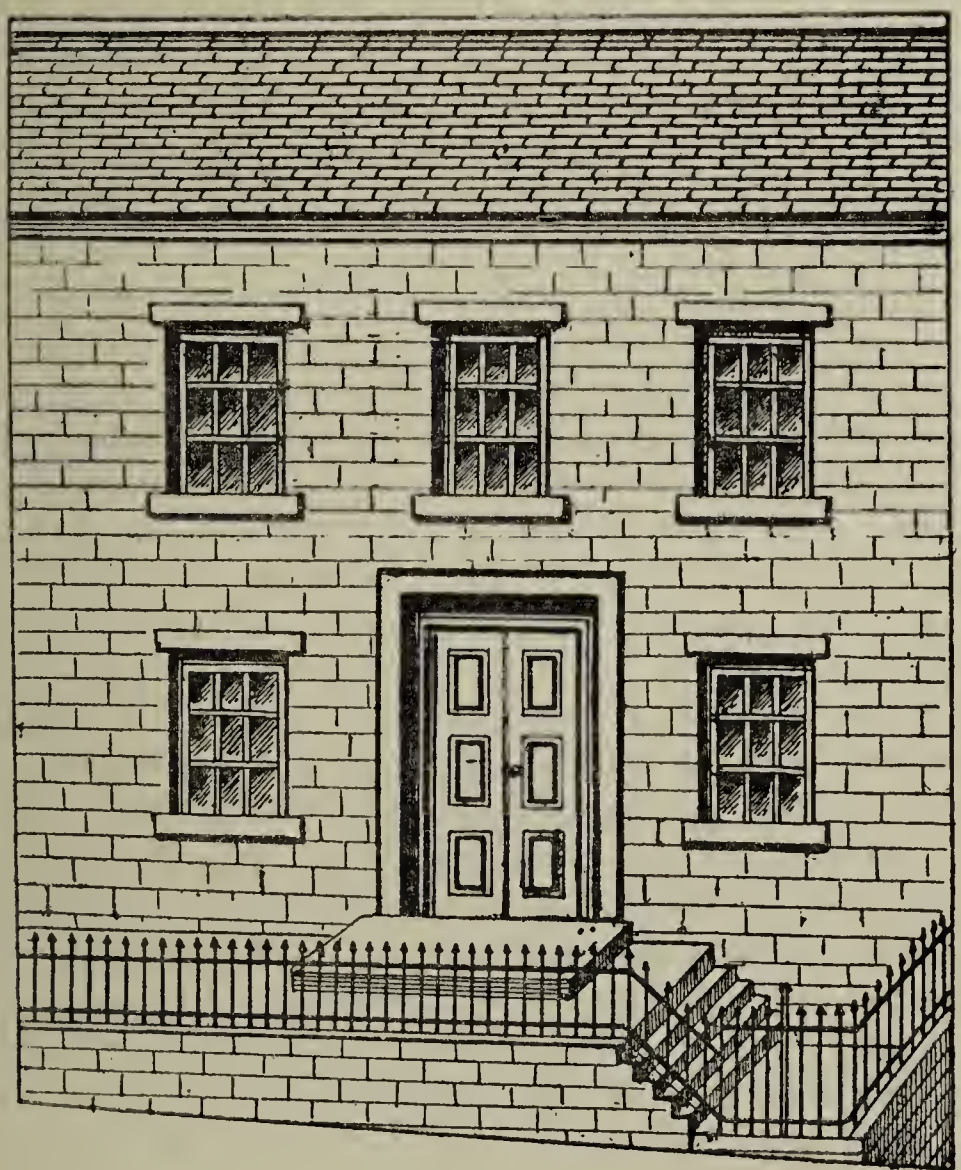
[1] *Diary*, vol. ii., p. 23.

Jonathan Rudman and others, dated 14th January 1809, refers not only to the land, but also to " all that building erected on the said plot of ground used as a chapel for the performance of Divine worship." As the chapel was erected seven years before what the Newchurch record quaintly calls " the kind interference of Dr John Thomson," which introduced the Cookites to Unitarianism, it is important to notice the terms in the deed which refer to the worship and to the minister of the chapel. The chapel is said to be " for Joseph Cooke, and such person or persons as he shall from time to time appoint and no other, to have the free use of the said chapel for the purpose of preaching and expounding therein God's holy word, and of performing all other acts of Divine worship." Joseph Cooke is described simply as " Minister of the Gospel," and amongst those to whom the surrender is made are six members of the Rochdale congregation.

The language of the Trust Deed is quite in the Methodist manner. The Wesleyan meeting-houses were settled, not upon Trustees, as amongst the Dissenters generally, but upon John Wesley himself, because, said Wesley, " the preacher would not dare speak the full and the whole truth, since, if he displeased the Trustees, he would be liable to lose his bread." It is, therefore, not without significance that the Deed is endorsed on the back as—" Declaration of Trust between Rev. Mr Cooke and the Trustees of a Methodist Chapel in Rossendale." Not until twenty years later was a burial ground acquired by the society.

On the first Sunday in January, 1809, Bethlehem Chapel, as it was called, was opened. Presumably Joseph Cooke was the preacher. The collection on this occasion realised £20, 14s. 1d. The chapel cost £500, of which £100 was raised by the congregation, and the rest borrowed. The building was small and bare, provided with a gallery. There was little in the way of decoration inside the chapel, the walls being whitewashed. There were pews only in the gallery, and the first quarter's seat

rents amounted to £7, 18s. 5d. The body of the chapel was left without pews, so that it might serve as a school-room. Music was provided by means of a bass viol. A



Bethlehem Chapel, Newchurch

Minute of the Methodist Conference in 1805 read : " Let no instrument be introduced into the singers' seat, except a Bass Viol, should the principal singer require it." At Newchurch it was required. The chapel, however, as early as 22nd March 1817, boasted an instrument dignified by the name of organ, but as it cost only £4 it

may have been a barrel organ, such as Edwin Waugh humorously described in *Tufts of Heather*. It is certainly the case that for nearly twenty years more the bass viol was not discarded. The singers had a pew to themselves and, on notable occasions, received special consideration in the shape of " meat and drink."

On the 1st May 1809 a Sunday school was begun and shortly afterwards a vestry library established.

Following the declaration of Cooke at the opening of Providence Chapel, the Cookites from the beginning gave themselves zealously to the study of the Scriptures. The result was that they rejected, one after another, the tenets of orthodoxy. First they asserted the doctrine of free-will, then abandoned the doctrine of Original Sin, and, a little later, rejected the current conception of the Atonement. " It was some years after this time," writes Ashworth, " before we knew anything of Unitarians or of Unitarian books except the Bible; what we read, therefore, in addition to the Bible, were books published by Trinitarians." He then acknowledges their indebtedness to Whitby's *Notes on the New Testament* for light on the doctrine of Original Sin, and to Dr Cooke's *Commentary* for help in formulating their view of the Atonement.

Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), the author of the first-named work, published his *Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament* in 1703. Fourteen years earlier he had taken a small part in the Socinian controversy by publishing a Latin tract on the divinity of Christ. A posthumous publication in 1727, *Last Thoughts*, which he called his retraction, clearly shows his Unitarianism, but his *Commentary* was rightly described as the work of a Trinitarian. Thomas Coke, D.C.L. (1747-1814), was probably the author of the second book to which Ashworth alludes, though, under the influence of the current pronunciation, he spells the name " Cooke." Coke was the President of the Sheffield Conference in 1805, before which Joseph Cooke was first examined. He was one of

the most prominent of John Wesley's coadjutors. His *Commentary* was published in the years 1803-1808, so that the Cookites used what was the latest Methodist commentary in their Biblical studies.

Unhappily for these diligent students, they were soon to be deprived by death of their teacher and leader. In the autumn of 1809 Joseph Cooke developed signs of phthisis. His last entry in the Newchurch baptismal register is dated 20th September 1809. After an illness of eighteen months, during which he was seldom able to conduct services, he died, at the early age of thirty-five, on the 14th March 1811.

A diary kept by his friends of the last few months of his life bears witness to the virility of his faith in the midst of great affliction. By his request the two sermons for which he was expelled from the Methodist Connexion were read to him, after which he affirmed his belief in their doctrine, and the purity of his motive in publishing them. " God is my record, I have no other end in view than that of truth." [1] He was buried in the aisle in front of the pulpit in Providence Chapel, Rochdale, where a brass plate still serves to mark the site of his grave.

It had been Cooke's habit to preach two or three times every Sunday, and several times during the week, at places as much as fifteen to twenty miles from home. " His days," said the medical man who attended him, " were unquestionably shortened by his exertions, particularly by the cold and wet rides he so often had to and from Rossendale." [2]

He left behind him a wife and five young children, and more than a thousand people to whom he had been a faithful and honoured friend and pastor. His opponents, " who had been very liberal in dealing out damnation," interpreted his death " as a judgment from God inflicted for broaching damnable heresy."

[1] Ashworth. *Ten Letters*, p. 70.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

In addition to the two sermons and the two pamphlets already named, Joseph Cooke was the author of *A Sunday Evening's Companion for Parents and Children: or, The History and Morality of the Bible comprised in Familiar Questions and Answers; Liberality of Sentiment and Praetice recommended in an Address to a Christian Society lately established by Joseph Cooke ; A Five and Threepenny Piece: or, A Dialogue between a Methodist Preacher and One of his Hearers, in Verse,* and sixteen hymns in *A Selection of Hymns,* posthumously published, of which he edited the greater part.

A Sunday Evening's Companion is a small duodecimo volume, published in Rochdale in 1810. It is designed to " draw the Bible history into such a narrow compass that it may neither be, nor appear to be, an intolerable task for a child to enter upon, and is expressed in such familiar language as can easily be understood." It is a competent little manual of its kind, and incidentally reveals its author's dislike of cards and dancing, an aversion pointing to his Methodist upbringing.

The *Address on Liberality of Sentiment and Praetice* bears no date. It is an appeal for religious toleration and an appreciation of theological freedom. Cooke himself disclaimed " any pretension to obtrude a creed of any kind " upon his people. " Let us," he said, " rank it amongst our highest privileges that we are at liberty to think freely without the danger of excommunication or censure for our conclusions." Acknowledging with gratitude his obligations to every teacher of truth, he begs that gratitude may not betray his hearers " into the folly of deifying all the notions of any one man, and of unmanning all the world besides." " Religion," he declares, " consists, not in notion, but in action." " It will perhaps be objected that nobody knows where the liberty which is here contended for may lead, but this objection is, in fact, its highest recommendation. When a boy is first taught the use of letters and figures, it may well be said that one knows not where it may lead—perhaps to con-

firm, to illustrate and to simplify the discoveries of a Newton." Alluding to the names by which his followers were known, Cooke observes, in the spirit of the seventeenth-century Socinians: "However unwilling you may be to distinguish yourselves from your fellow-Christians by any name that may signify your attachment to any leader, or to any system, it will scarcely be possible to prevent your being thus distinguished by others, as accident and humour may direct. Nor need that consideration give you much concern. Let it be only your highest ambition to deserve that unassuming and appropriate title of the first Christians, 'a disciple of Christ.'" Then, drawing to a close, in a sentence highly significant in view of the later doctrinal developments of his disciples, Cooke remarks: "Let us ever remember that we are but learners who have learnt a little, who have much to learn, and perhaps more to unlearn than we are aware of."

The doctrinal position of Cooke at the date of his death is not easily defined. Original Sin and the Atonement, as popularly understood, were no longer part of his creed. "With regard to the doctrine of the Trinity," said his colleague, "I do not know that he ever said anything either for or against it in his public preaching; but sure I am that he was no Trinitarian." The proof given for this statement is the fact that in making a collection of hymns more agreeable to his views than the Methodist Hymn Book "he altered several hymns which he selected from it, particularly when he met with any hymn in which stood the words 'Trinity' or 'Triune God'; these he threw out and inserted others in their place." "As far as I can judge," concluded Ashworth, "from scraps of manuscript writing which I have seen, and incidental expressions which I have heard him drop (for I never talked particularly with him on the subject—he died before I thought much about it), I believe he might fairly be called a Sabellian." [1]

[1] *Ten Letters*, p. 47.

A close analysis of the hymn book in question and of its sources confirms the opinion of Ashworth that Cooke was certainly no Trinitarian.

The *Selection of Hymns, Principally Collected and Corrected by the Late Rev. Joseph Cooke* was published in 1813. It is divided into two books, the first of which, containing two hundred and eight hymns, including sixteen by the editor, was prepared for the Press by Cooke himself; the second book, containing one hundred and twenty-six hymns, was the compilation of his friends, of whom Ashworth was chief. The Preface describes and defends objections felt by the Cookites to expressions in certain Methodist hymns with regard to the capacity of man to turn to God, the doctrine of the Atonement, the denial of free-will, also to phrases like "The great Jehovah dies," "The immortal God had died for me" and "Jehovah crucified." Of the sixteen hymns by Cooke, fourteen are either unmistakably Unitarian or neutral in sentiment, one is ambiguous, and another contains a verse which may be interpreted as setting aside the doctrine of the Incarnation.

Of the six collections of hymns from which Cooke made selections, in addition to the Methodist Hymn Book, five were compiled by Unitarians, using the term in its broad sense to include Arians—namely, those known as Kippis's and Cappe's, the Liverpool, the Birmingham and the Salisbury collections. Two Unitarian writers are also named as authors — namely, Mrs Barbauld and Thomas Jervis. In the hymns taken from these collections Cooke made various verbal alterations, and occasionally omitted a verse, but none of the corrections or omissions possesses any doctrinal significance. More important are the prefaces to the collections themselves as indicating their character and the reasons why they appealed to the Methodist heretic.

The *Collection of Hymns for Public Worship on the General Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion*, published at Salisbury in 1778, was edited by Benjamin

Williams, a Presbyterian minister of Arian opinions. The Preface declares that " it is evidently the dictate of Christian charity that what is provided for Public Worship should be as generally unexceptionable as possible." The word " Unitarian " does not occur in it.

The *Collection of Psalms for Social Worship*, published at York in 1786, was edited by Newcome Cappe, Unitarian minister in that city from 1756-1800. The title " was significant, and indicated a departure from the awesome hymns of which Watts was a master," and " the introduction of hymns containing social sentiment." [1] The Preface makes no allusion to Unitarianism, but mentions amongst other collections to which the compiler was indebted that of Theophilus Lindsey, and gives an Explication of Terms and Phrases in a Unitarian sense.

The *Psalms and Hymns Originally Intended for Protestant Dissenters in Birmingham*, published anonymously in 1790, was the work of William Hawkes and Joseph Priestley. The Preface observes : " Most of the variations from Dr Watts's compositions have been made for the sake of rendering the sentiment unexceptionable to Unitarian Christians."

The *Collection of Hymns and Psalms for Public and Private Worship*, London, 1795, was announced as selected and prepared by Andrew Kippis, Abraham Rees, Thomas Jervis and Thomas Morgan. The Preface does not indicate that the compilers were Unitarians, but speaks of " the generality of Presbyterian societies in the Metropolis and its vicinity using Dr Watts's psalms," and of the need to modify the defects in these relating to " contentious and distinguishing words of sects and parties." It was the first of the Unitarian hymnals to attain to any extended circulation.

The Liverpool collection has no preface.

In face of the evidence these hymnals afford, it is reasonable to conjecture that Joseph Cooke was not

[1] Colligan. *Eighteenth-Century Nonconformity*, p. 96.

entirely ignorant of Unitarian principles, much less of the name, when he compiled his collections of hymns eighteen months before his death. Other considerations may be urged, pointing in the same direction. Not infrequently during the Methodist ministry of Cooke, Socinianism, Arianism and Dr Priestley came under the lash of writers in *The Methodist Magazine*—the official organ of the Methodist societies. The town of Dudley, near which Cooke was born and lived until 1795, is only eight miles distant from Birmingham. He was sixteen years of age when, in 1791, the famous Birmingham riots took place, which terminated Priestley's eleven years' ministry in that city, and ultimately drove him to find refuge in America. On the memorable night of the 14th July, when Priestley fled before an infuriated mob, it was at Heath, near Dudley, the residence of his daughter, Mrs Finch, that he spent a couple of nights before proceeding to London.

It is almost incredible that Cooke did not recognise the authorship of the Birmingham Hymn Book, nor understand anything of the meaning of the words " Unitarian Christianity " in its Preface.

It may well have been the case that Cooke did not encourage Ashworth to " talk particularly " with him on the subject of the Trinity, in view of the opposition of the latter in 1806 to the opinions of his minister expressed in his published sermons. The new societies were also steadily advancing in the Liberal direction, and a premature Radicalism on the part of their leader might have brought about a reaction towards orthodoxy.

It still remains true that John Ashworth and his fellow-worshippers knew nothing of Unitarianism when Cooke died in 1811.

Blackwater Street Chapel, Rochdale, where a type of Unitarianism had been taught for some time, must have been known to the Methodist heretics. It does not follow that they were familiar with the tenets of its ministers.

From 1778 to 1806 Thomas Threlkeld was the minister of Blackwater Street Chapel. He is chiefly remembered as a man of remarkable linguistic attainments, who was the groomsman of Joseph Priestley on the occasion of his marriage to Mary Wilkinson at Wrexham. Illustrating his devotion to philology under all circumstances, it is related that when the clergyman inquired, " Who gives this woman to be married to this man ? " no response was forthcoming, in consequence of Threlkeld, who played the part of the father, having disappeared. A search was made and the truant found in an old-fashioned lofty pew entirely absorbed in reading an old Welsh Bible. Despite a wonderful memory, he is said to have been quite incapable of delivering a sermon otherwise than by very close reading of his manuscript. A friend of Dr Thomas Barnes (1747-1810), the Arian minister of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, Threlkeld by his exposition of doctrine probably made no stir amongst the class from which the Cookites were drawn, and apparently left most of his own hearers where he found them. One of his successors, Gilbert W. Elliott, minister 1814-1826, speaking in 1818, called Joseph Cooke " the father of Unitarianism in the town," and added: " Many members of my congregation were led by the labours of that excellent person to their present convictions, and I conceive both congregations, Blackwater Street and the Methodist Unitarian, are greatly, if not equally, indebted to him."

As for the Cookites of Newchurch, it is quite likely that they had not so much as heard of the heresy into which they had fallen. The Rossendale valley, in the early years of the nineteenth century, was a sparsely inhabited district, whose inhabitants clung tenaciously to the soil that gave them birth, and Newchurch, not being on any of the recognised coach routes, enjoyed little communication with the outside world. When, however, in 1813 the second of the two books forming the Cookite Hymnal was compiled, it is worthy of

remark that Ashworth and his colleagues did not include a single hymn of Wesley's amongst the one hundred and twenty-six for which they were responsible, whilst on the other hand they availed themselves not only of the Unitarian collections used by Cooke, but also those of Pope, Enfield, Walker and the Exeter collection.

Though in the prefaces to these collections the name " Unitarian " does not occur, the principles for which it stood are not obscurely stated. Thus the editor of the Exeter collection, published 1812, " constantly kept in view the grand truth that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only true God, and the only proper object of worship," whilst George Walker, in editing the collection published at Warrington in 1788, referred to " the great changes in religious faith which have taken place, since the period in which the different collections of Psalms and Hymns of most general acceptation were first introduced, which rendered it highly improper, if not absolutely criminal, to continue any longer in the use of what the mind at present revolts from."

Whether the additional hymnals used by the Cookites were found in the library of their dead leader or not cannot be determined ; possibly they were introduced to the notice of Ashworth as a consequence of a visit of Richard Wright, the Missionary of the Unitarian Fund, who preached once in Providence Chapel in 1812, when the Cookite Hymnal was in course of preparation.

In any case, the introduction of Joseph Cooke's followers to Unitarianism in 1815 was by no means so sudden, dramatic or singular as it has sometimes been represented.

CHAPTER II

THE COOKITES (1811-1818)

The early death of Joseph Cooke was a serious blow for the movement he had so lately founded. Even his presence and influence had not prevented dissension from breaking out at Rochdale amongst those who disliked his liberal views. Before his death four of the Trustees of Providence Chapel had resigned, and one who remained was to be the source of further strife.

To the two local preachers, Ashworth and Taylor, who had co-operated with Cooke, there was now added a third, in the person of James Wilkinson, shoemaker of Rochdale, afterwards known as "the Cobbler Parson." Wilkinson was at this time a young man of twenty-four, and had been a local preacher amongst the Methodists for a period of seven years. But as even three preachers were unable to supply all the stations in the circuit, it was necessary to look elsewhere for ministerial help. There was at this date no Independent chapel in Rochdale, and a few families of independent persuasion having joined Providence Chapel, neighbouring Independent ministers of Calvinist opinion were invited occasionally to supply the pulpit—an arrangement which John Ashworth and a majority of the congregation strongly disapproved. After some months the worshippers became weary of the confusion of tongues. A Mr Finch, of Lyme Regis, who differed from some of his flock on the subject of the devil, was then invited to Rochdale, but, upon the entreaty of his friends, declined the invitation. Subsequently, in July, 1812, in answer to an advertisement in the Press for a minister of liberal sentiments, a Mr James

Bowman, an Ipswich Methodist local preacher, made application for the vacant pulpit. It is noteworthy that at this date, whilst the disciples of Cooke realised that they were theologically liberals, they advertised in a Methodist magazine and were content to accept the services of a Methodist local preacher. The appointment was conditioned only by the acceptance of the circuit preaching Plan already in vogue. The Trustee of Providence Chapel, already alluded to, seized the opportunity to endeavour to break the connection with Newchurch on the ground of Ashworth's doctrinal tendencies, but failed of his purpose in face of the acquiescence in the plan on the part of Bowman, who was then appointed.

At Newchurch there was a real need for the support which the circuit afforded. Indeed, soon after Cooke's death, suffering from a sense of isolation and poverty, a proposal was actually made to join some other Christian denomination. "But to this it was objected," says Ashworth,[1] "that as there were no Christians in the world that we knew of excepting those whom Mr Cooke had taught, who believed as we did, we could not with satisfaction hear preaching which would be directly opposed to what, from conviction, we had embraced, nor easily surrender those truths which had cost us so much."

At Cooke's death the society "consisted of about sixty persons." "A debt of £400," said the Chapel Trustees, "the novelty of our sentiments, and the offence that was generally taken at them, along with the death of Mr Cooke, made us tremble under the burthen." A conference of the society, however, put fresh heart into the Cookites, and under the leadership of their three young preachers the congregation steadily increased in numbers and in enthusiasm.

[1] *Ten Letters*, p. 52.

THE PREACHERS' AND PRAYER LEADERS' PLAN

At Providence Chapel, Rochdale, 1812

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."—Matthew xxvi. 41.

	Hours	Sept.		Oct.				Nov.					Dec.	
		20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	6	13
Providence Chapel	10½ 2½ 6	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2		1	1	2
New Church	10½ 2½	1	6	2	7	1	8	2		1	6	2		1
Paddiham				7	10		4	5	3		4	7	6	
Littleborough	6	6				4				6				4
Top of Toad Lane	7		9		10		11		18		13		14	
Church Lane	7	15		16		17		10		17		9		14
Lanehead	6		13	6	11		10	4	11		14	6	18	
Broadley	6	16		17		18		9		15		11		10
Meanwood	7		12		12		18		12		15		10	
Broad o'th Lane	7	17		18		9		14		12		13		11
Small-bridge	7		11		13		12		13		16		11	
Fivehouses	6	18		9		10		16		11		14		12
Whitworth	6		4	11		12	6	17	4	9	10	15	6	16
Crompton	6	4	14	10	14	6	15	13	15	4	18	16	9	16
Lowerplace	7	14	15	12	16	9	17	18	16	13	11	17	13	15
Bagslate	6				6				6				4	

Quarterly Meeting, 7th October

References

James Bowman	1	W. Robinson	10
John Ashworth	2	James Wilkes	11
Jonathan Redman	3	James Hoyle	12
John Mills	4	James Driver	13
J. Pollard	5	Thomas Jones	14
James Taylor	6	Benjamin Howarth	15
John Robinson	7	W. Dean	16
John Crawshaw	8	Robert Heape	17
James Ashworth	9	J. Hoyle	18

The earliest extant Plan, September-December, 1812, shows a list of eighteen Preachers and Prayer Leaders, and no fewer than sixteen stations. The errors in spelling, "Paddiham," "Redman" and "Wilkes," for Padiham, Rudman and Wilkinson respectively, may reflect the local colloquial pronunciation of these names.

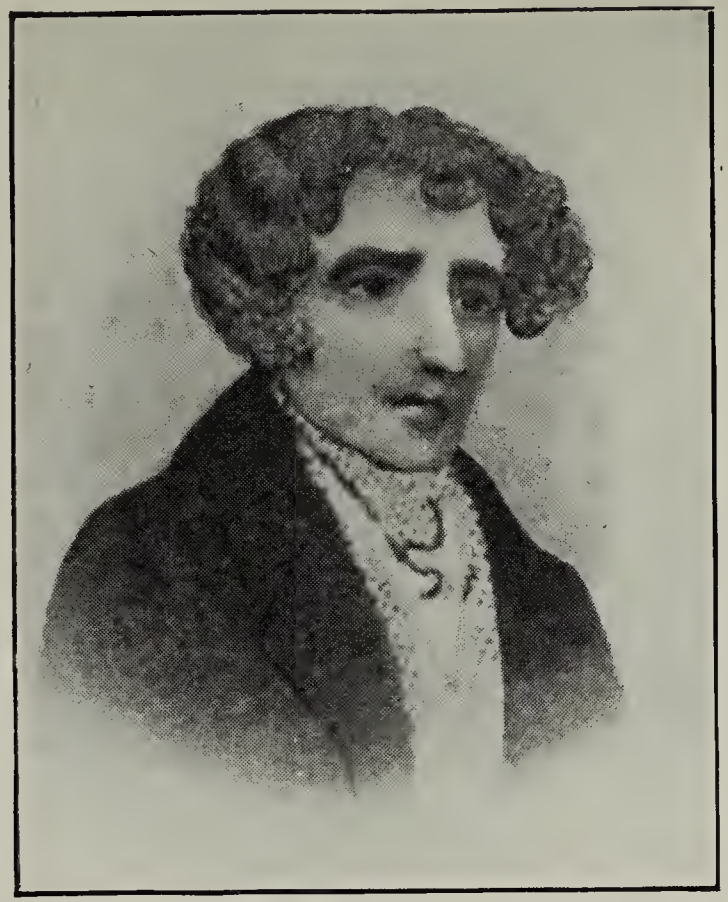
The majority of the men whose names are on the Plan

were Prayer Leaders, and resembled in their functions the Methodist Class Leaders. Those mainly responsible for the preaching, apart from James Bowman, were James Taylor and James Wilkinson, of Rochdale, John Ashworth and Jonathan Rudman, of Newchurch, and James Pollard and John Robinson, of Padiham. These six are on all the four surviving Plans, dated 1812, 1815, 1816 and 1817. They are also included in a list of preachers published in 1818, and are frequently mentioned in the reports of the annual meetings of the Methodist Unitarians.

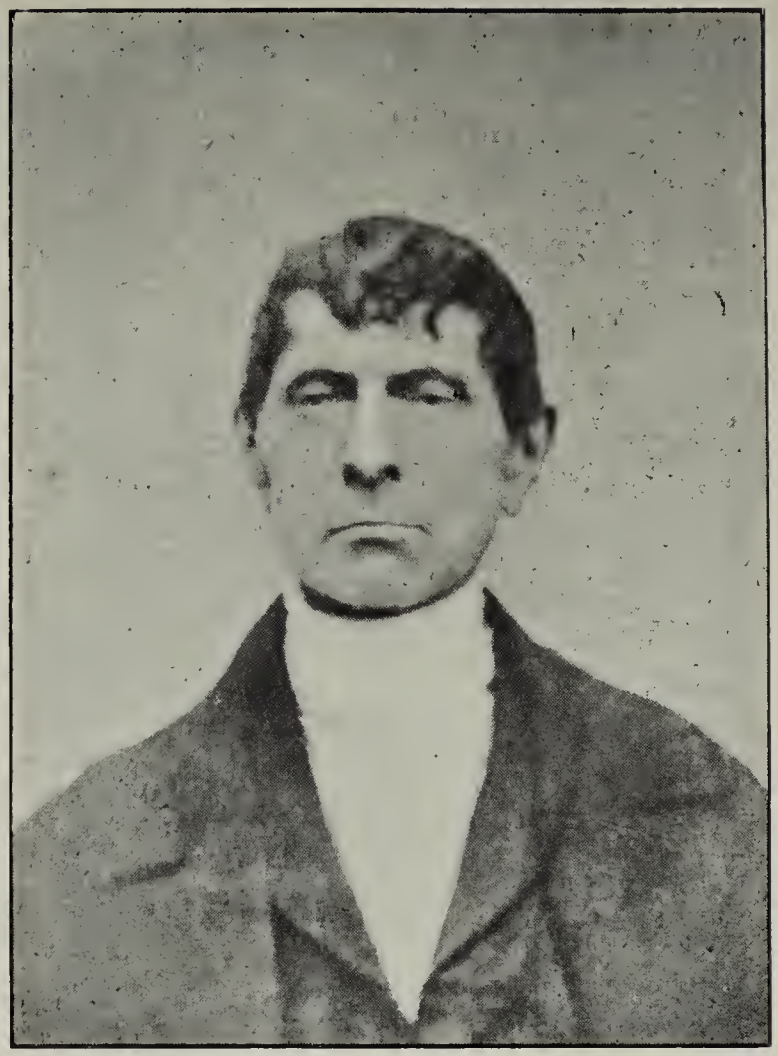
Of the stations on the various Plans many were simply the homes of Prayer Leaders and other prominent members of the societies at Rochdale. This was almost certainly the case with the stations called " Top of Toad Lane," " Church Lane " and " Broad o'th Lane," which are in the town of Rochdale.

The intimate connection of Broad o'th Lane (1812-1815 Plans) with the Methodist Unitarian Movement is shown by the local name, " Broad o'th Lane Sing," for long applied to Clover Street Sunday School Anniversary. Fivehouses is the name given to what is now Crossfield Road, Wardle, a village on the north-east side of Rochdale. The five houses were the property of John Scott, farmer and woollen-carder, who lived in one of them and was probably a member of the Rochdale society. As his will was proved on the 26th June 1815, it may be surmised that the disappearance of Fivehouses from the Plan before January, 1815, was due to his death. Nacks and Kitbooth, which appear on the 1815 and 1816 Plans, are two farmhouses. The former, situated on the road leading from Broadley to Lanehead, contains a tolerably large room, and the date on a later extension of the farm buildings is 1821. The latter, near Lanehead, is a commodious building dated 1737. These two farmhouses would be easily visited by the preachers on their way to or from Rochdale and Newchurch. Buersill, on the 1815 Plan, is in the area of Lowerplace and may

Plate II



JAMES TAYLOR



JAMES WILKINSON

To face page 34

represent a variant name of that locality. Broadley, Smallbridge, Whitworth, Lowerplace, Littleborough and Bagslate were hamlets and villages situated within a radius of three miles from Rochdale.

At Lowerplace, Lanehead and Meanwood were rooms used as Sunday schools and places of worship. Lowerplace is on three Plans and Lanehead on two. In August, 1817, a dwelling-house at Lowerplace in the occupation of John Clegg was registered in the Public Episcopal Registry of Chester as a place of worship by Protestant dissenters from the Church of England of the denomination of Unitarians. The signatures include James Driver, one of the preachers on the Plans for 1812 and 1817, another, Benjamin Howarth, on the 1812 Plan, and a third—the householder—whose initials are on the 1815 Plan.

Lanehead is on the 1812 and 1817 Plans, and on the 1815 Plan is called the Schoolroom. Here a branch Sunday school was held for over twenty years in connection with the Rochdale society. In 1823, when the scholars numbered a hundred, a schoolroom was erected for their use, in which services were conducted for some years. The building, called Fair View, is situated a short distance from the foot of Rooley Moor Road, which runs from Rochdale to Rossendale. It has been converted into three cottages. The schoolroom was about twelve yards long and six yards in width. It was the scene of John Bright's maiden speech in 1830, when the famous orator, then a youth of nineteen, addressed, with great trepidation, a rustic audience, said to be appalling neither in numbers nor in intelligence, on the subject of Temperance.

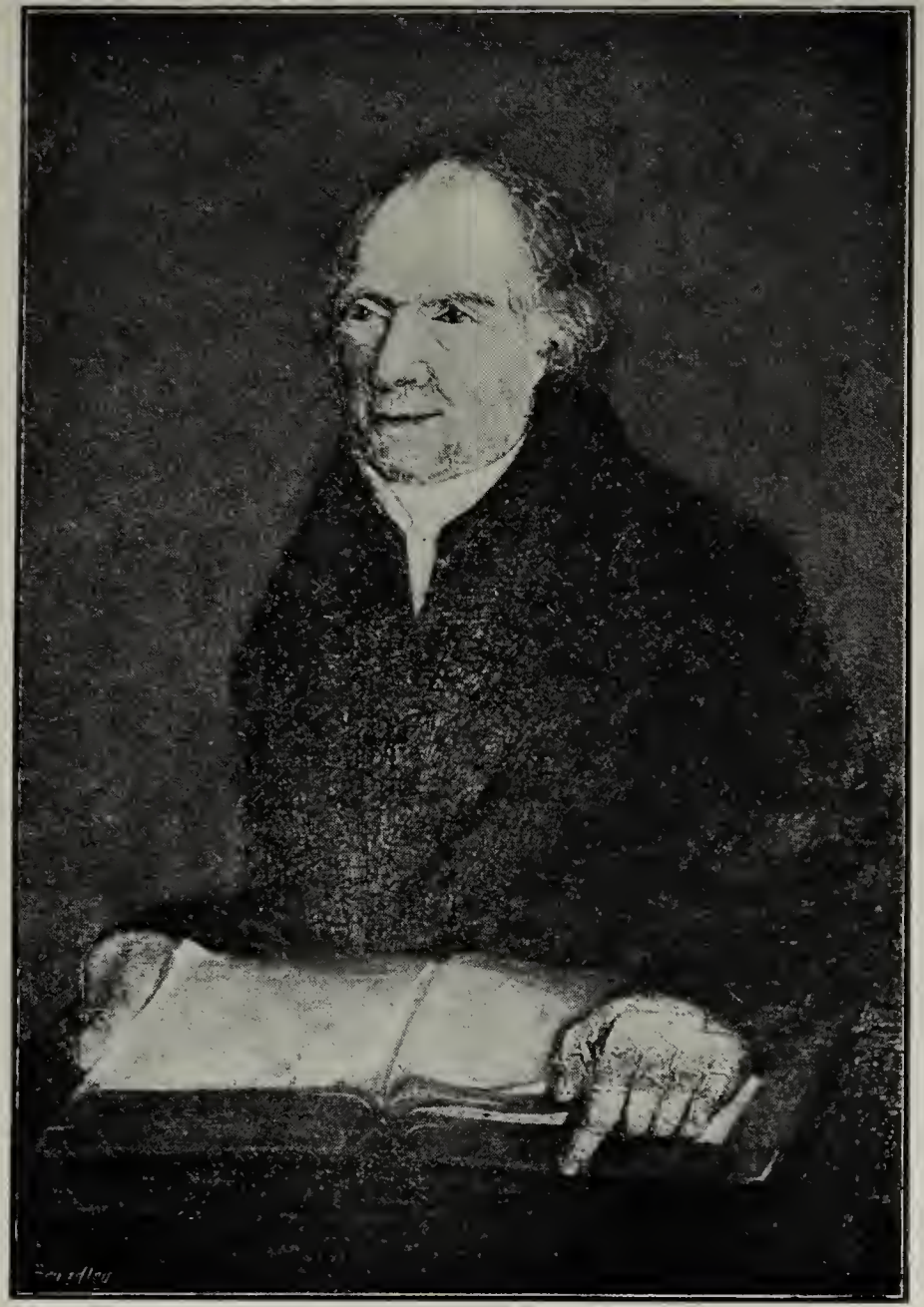
Meanwood, which is on the Spotland Road, Rochdale, though only on the 1812 Plan, enjoyed Unitarian services at least as late as 1818, when Richard Wright preached there in a large room crowded with attentive hearers.

John Ashworth, in reprinting the 1817 Plan as an

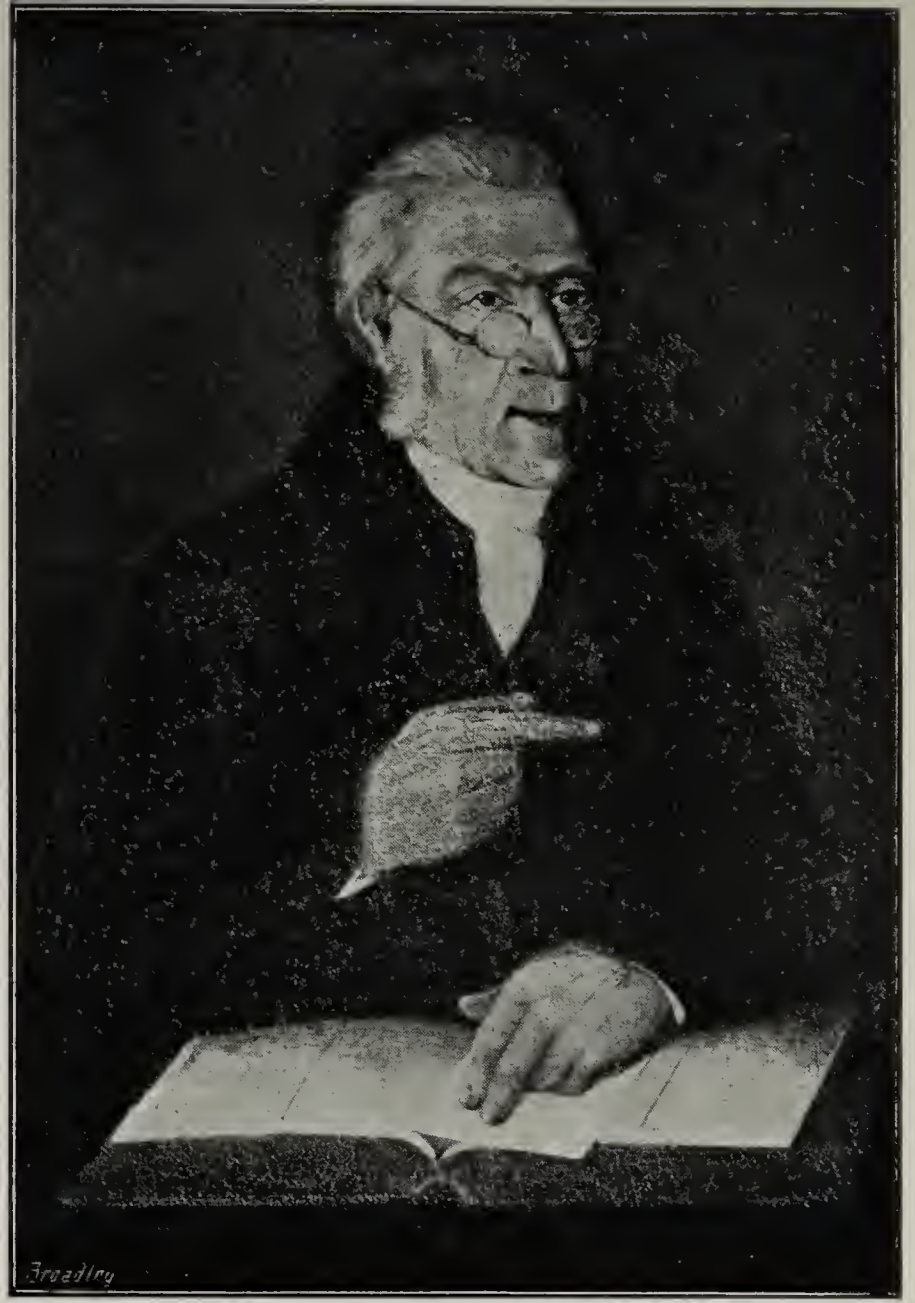
Appendix to his *Letters* published that year, adds a note that " Whitworth, Lanehead and Lowerplace make part of the Rochdale congregation." " The congregation at Rochdale," he says, " in an afternoon, in general, consists of about 150 persons; the Newchurch congregation, in an afternoon, of more than 200 persons; Padiham, of from 50 to 80 persons."

At the outset the Padiham congregation had no habitation, and Ashworth recalled in 1828 how, on his first visit to the village, he preached standing on a little stool at the corner of a house in the open air. Shortly afterwards a small upper room in Back Lane (now East Street) was secured. There was a joiner's shop over it and a family living under it, but here services were held and a Sunday school conducted until 1823. The records relate that Joseph Cooke preached here on the 14th July 1808, when his expenses were 3s. 6d. By his services on the 23rd October in the same year John Ashworth involved the society in the expenditure of 4d. for the " Hostler," but on the 3rd January 1809 his " horse's expence " ran to 12s. On the 23rd April 1809 a pulpit was bought, which, with a window added to the room, cost £4, 10s. These items represent expenditure which to the Padiham society in its early days was serious enough.

For more than forty years Padiham was the principal scene of the devoted labours of James Pollard and John Robinson, two cotton weavers, " hard wrought, half starved, worthy men," as John Ashworth called them. Pollard, at the early age of sixteen, became a Wesleyan local preacher whilst resident at Bury. John Wesley is said to have heard him preach twice and to have complimented him upon his efforts. He might have become a travelling preacher, but always declined. He left the Methodist Connexion when Cooke was expelled from it. John Robinson joined the Methodists in 1796, when he was twenty-one years of age. He also followed Cooke, but did not preach among the Cookites until three or four



JAMES POLLARD



JOHN ROBINSON

To face page 36

years after the Movement began, and ultimately, by the study of Scripture, became, like his colleagues, a convinced Unitarian.

The 1815 Plan includes only eight stations as against sixteen three years earlier. One reason for the decline in the number may be found in the disturbances which broke out in the Rochdale society in October, 1812—nineteen months after Cooke's death, and four months after the appointment of Bowman as his successor. Bowman differed from the rest of the preachers on the doctrines of Original Sin and the Atonement, and freely expounded his views. As a result the Newchurch congregation, without John Ashworth's knowledge, intimated to the new preacher their disagreement with his teaching, and deputed one of their number to speak with him on the subject. Bowman declined the interview, and retorted, in a letter to Ashworth, that his last discourse at Rochdale had given offence, adding an expression of opinion that " the mutual benefit of both people with regard to our exchange is nearly at an end." This was quickly followed by drastic action on the part of the Trustees of Providence Chapel. By a majority of one they passed a resolution excluding John Ashworth from the Rochdale pulpit, unless he agreed to preach " according to Mr Cooke's printed works registered in the Trust Deed of the Chapel." Three-fourths of the congregation, including four Trustees, sympathising with Ashworth, immediately seceded. Bowman himself resigned three months later in consequence of a difference with the Trustee who had created a schism in the society. The chapel was then closed, and ultimately in 1814 was sold to the Independents, becoming the parent church of Congregationalism in Rochdale.

From this time on Newchurch became the centre of the Cookite Movement, and John Ashworth its virtual head. For a short time the Rochdale Cookites met for worship, by the permission of its minister and members, in the Blackwater Street Chapel. Then a room known

as Greenwood's School in Drake Street was hired, and public worship and a Sunday school were held there until a chapel was built in 1818.

Soon after the settlement of affairs at Rochdale the Cookites, under the guidance of John Ashworth, resumed their theological inquiries, especially investigating the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity. The result was the rejection of the Athanasian Creed. Christ they believed was "not the uncreated Jehovah," but "the greatest among men" . . . "the Saviour of all men," who "at the end of the world will appear again to judge the world in righteousness." In the course of their investigations the disciples of Cooke were frequently accused of "throwing away the Bible," and "of having a new Bible," though "it was from the Bible, and particularly from the common version of the New Testament," that they derived their doctrine. "Such was our ignorance of men and books that taught what we now believe," said Ashworth in 1817, "that at the time we were relinquishing the doctrines of reputed Orthodoxy, we supposed ourselves to be the only people in the world who believed in this way." [1] "Indeed, the place at which we are now arrived," said the Newchurch Chapel Trustees in 1815, "is supposed by our orthodox neighbours to be 'the mystery of iniquity.'" [2]

The introduction of the Cookites to organised Unitarianism arose as a result of their preachers supplying a few times the pulpit of the Elland Unitarian Chapel. They may have owed the invitation to preach there to the Rev. Richard Astley, minister of the neighbouring congregation at Halifax, who from 1810-1812 was at Blackwater Street, Rochdale, and presumably acquainted with the Cookite Movement. At the Welcome Meeting on the 7th September 1815 to John Beattie as minister of Elland the sentiment of "John Ashworth and our friends in Rossendale" was honoured in a way that

[1] *Ten Letters*, p. 63.
[2] *Theological Repository*, vol. x., p. 313.

suggests the Methodist heretics had pleased and edified the Elland Unitarians. The cause at Elland was very feeble. Richard Wright reported in 1819 that before Beattie came " it was all but extinct." Apparently the Cookites were here engaged in a work of resurrection. It brought them great recompense. They came under the notice of Dr John Thomson, of Halifax, one of the Trustees of Elland Chapel, by whom they were made known to the Unitarian public.

John Thomson (1782-1818) was a man of considerable distinction. A native of Kendal, he studied for four years at the Manchester Academy, and for four and a half years was minister at Bostock. Compelled, it is said by a reverse of fortune, to adopt a more lucrative profession, he studied medicine and graduated M.D. at Edinburgh in 1807. He was an enthusiastic Unitarian and the author of three hymns in Aspland's *Selection of Psalms and Hymns for Unitarian Worship* (1810)—the first instance of the term " Unitarian " appearing on the title-page of a hymn-book. At a meeting held at Oldham, 4th January 1816, on the occasion of opening the Unitarian chapel there, Thomson formulated a scheme for the foundation of the Fellowship Funds, which did so much to strengthen Unitarian efforts in the early part of last century.

At the instance of Dr Thomson application for assistance was made on 11th May 1815 to the Trustees of the Lady Hewley's Fund by the Newchurch congregation in behalf of their minister. The appeal, signed by three of the Trustees of Bethlehem Chapel, was supported by the Revs. Wm. Allard, of Bury, G. W. Elliott, of Rochdale, and Rd. Astley, of Halifax, and by eight laymen, including Dr Thomson. A grant of £12 was made by the Fund and continued annually until 1830. In 1833 the Unitarian Trustees were removed as the result of the celebrated Lady Hewley Case (1830-1842), in which the payments to John Ashworth constituted part of the indictment of the Trustees for the misapplication of a

charity intended for "poor and godly ministers of Christ's holy gospel."

The monies received by Ashworth were generously devoted by him to the liquidation of the debt on the chapel at Newchurch so long as it remained.

The application of 1815 to the Lady Hewley Fund, with observations upon it by Dr Thomson, was published in *The Monthly Repository* of May in that year. It opens with a curious quotation from the speech of Tertullus against Paul before the Procurator Felix (Acts xxiv. 4): "Having heard that you are entrusted with bounty which enables you to relieve the distress of needy ministers, we beseech you of your clemency to hear us a few words." The Scripture passage is liberally interpreted. What follows is a fairly comprehensive story of the past history and present position of the Methodist Unitarian Movement. Speaking of their rejection of the doctrine of the Atonement, the writers observe, in picturesque language, that they "cast this ancient piece of orthodoxy to the moles and the bats." The christology of the Cookites in the period before their leader's death is characterised as Sabellian—a term which may be suspected to have belonged to John Ashworth's vocabulary rather than to that of the worthies to whom it is attributed.

An earnest appeal by Dr Thomson to the Unitarian public for help in clearing off the debt of £350 at Newchurch met with such success that by January, 1817, it was reduced to £88, 13s. 4d.

The Plan on opposite page was published in *The Monthly Repository*, May, 1815.

The number of stations is ten, or eleven, counting Padiham and Burnley as two. The preachers number eleven, and there are ten Prayer Leaders, whose initials only are given. The stipends of John Ashworth and James Wilkinson were stated by Dr Thomson to be not more than £10 and £5 respectively. Other preachers did not receive even an honorarium.

On the 11th June 1815 the Rev. John Grundy of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, preached at Newchurch in the morning to a congregation of about five hundred, in

"And now I say unto you, refrain from these men," etc.—Acts v. 38, 39.

Places of Meeting		Jan.			Feb.				March				April					May				June			
		15	22	29	5	12	19	26	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25
Rochdale . .	$10\frac{1}{2}$ $2\frac{1}{2}$	1	5	1	4	1	5	1	4	1	5	1	4	1	5	1	4	1	5	1	4	1	5	1	4
Newchurch . .	$10\frac{1}{2}$ $2\frac{1}{2}$	4	1	5	1	4	1	5	1	4	1	5	1	4	1	5	1	6	1	4	1	3	1	4	1
Padiham and Burnley . .			4				5				4				5				4				5		
Whitworth . .	6		5				4				5				4				5				4		
Kitbooth . .	6		7			8			4		11			10			4		11			9			4
Nacks . . .	6	11			5		7			8			5		9			10			5		7		
Broad o'th Lane .	6	8	9		7	10	11		8	9	10		7	11	8		9	7	8		10	11	9		8
Lowerplace . .	7		10			5			7		9		4		10			8			4		11		
Buersill . . .	7	1			9			10		5				7			5			9		8			5
School Room . .	11				4				5				4				5				4				5

Preachers and Prayer Leaders

1. John Ashworth
2. J. Rudman
3. J. Pollard
4. J. Taylor
5. J. Wilkinson
6. J. Robinson
7. J. Ashworth
   J. T.
   T. J.
8. J. Hoyle
   J. B.
   G. R.
9. J. Driver
   J. L.
   R. W.
10. B. Howarth
    W. G.
    J. C.
11. J. Lomax
    R. A.
    A. P.

Monthly Conversation Meetings on religious subjects when the vacant column occurs.

the afternoon to more than six hundred. The afternoon is described as "a charity sermon for the Sunday school," and the collection amounted to nearly £14, or "more than double any preceding collection." There were present at the services "friends from Halifax, Rochdale,

Haslingden, Burnley, Padiham and the neighbouring country." The Rev. John Grundy is the first minister named in connection with the Sunday School Anniversary at Newchurch, earlier anniversaries having been conducted by Cooke and his colleagues. He was also the first regular Unitarian minister to preach at Newchurch, and, if the numbers of his hearers are only approximately correct, he must have preached in the open air. The occasion of his services may be regarded as the first assembly of the community, which may henceforth be properly denominated Methodist Unitarian.

In July, 1815, Benjamin Goodier, a student of Robert Aspland's Academy at Hackney, afterwards first minister of Lord Street Chapel, Oldham, spent three days on a visit to the Methodist Unitarians. In a letter dated 1st August he gives his impressions of them, expressing his admiration for their " simplicity, good sense, seriousness and piety." James Taylor he describes as " in pretty good circumstances." His father kept a farm and conducted a woollen dye-house near Rochdale, and he found the preacher " working in the dye-house, which is so hot that the workmen are obliged to throw off their shirts." The inhabitants of Rossendale Goodier found to be " simple and unlettered in general," but " possessing considerable information on religious subjects." " The Unitarian chapel is a small, but very neat building, and the congregation is in a good state. John Ashworth is much beloved amongst them, and minister and people live on terms of cordiality and friendship. I slept at John's house one night ; about nine o'clock, when the sun had set and the people could not see to work, six or seven of them came to see and converse with their preacher ; most of them were without hats and coats, with their aprons and clogs, and one of them was smoking his pipe. They were all serious, and engaged in religious conversation with great readiness. Religion with them is an affair of the heart and life, not merely, as with many,

a speculative inquiry. I encouraged John to write for *The Christian Reformer*, and I hope he will, though at present he is very busy with his trade, his preaching, and his writing."

The Preachers' Plan for July-December, 1816 includes only eight stations and six preachers, the Prayer Leaders being omitted:

Places and Hours of Meeting		July			August				Sept.					Oct.				Nov.				Dec.				
	M. A. E.	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	29
Rochdale . .	10½ 2½	1	3	1	4	1	3	1	2	1	4	1	3	1	4	1	2	1	3	1	4	1	3	1	4	1
Newchurch . .	10½ 2½	3	1	4	1	6	1	3	1	5	1	4	1	3	1	4	1	3	1	4	1	3	1	4	1	3
Padiham and Burnley . .	1½ 6		4				3				2				3				4				6			
Whitworth . .	6	4				3				4				4				2				4				3
Nacks or Kitbooth	6		2				4				3				4				2				4			
Lowerplace . .	6	1				4				3				1				4				1				4

PREACHERS

1. John Ashworth
2. Jonathan Rudman
3. James Taylor
4. James Wilkinson
5. James Pollard
6. John Robinson

On the Plan for the following six months (January-June, 1817) there are nine stations and thirteen preachers (see p. 44).

Two preaching stations are included for the first time—namely, Bury and Oldham, neither of them of Methodist Unitarian foundation.

Bury was associated with the names of Edmund Grundy and James Kay. Edmund Grundy was a prominent Bury Unitarian and one of the founders of the Sunday school established in 1805 in connection with the Silver Street (afterwards Bank Street) congregation.

James Kay, who was announced on the 1817 Plan to preach at the Rochdale meeting of the Methodist Unitarian Association in Whitsun week, was a native of

Places and Hours of Meeting	Jan.			Feb.				March					April				May				June				
	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29
Rochdale . . . 10½ 2½	1	4	8	3	1	4	1	2	1	4	1	3	1	8	1	3	1	4	1	3	1	4	1	3	1
Newchurch . . 10½ 2½	3	1	4	1	3	1	4	1	3	8	4	1	3	1	4	1	3	8	4	1	11	1	3	1	12
Padiham and Burnley . . 1½ 6	11	12	11	13	12	11	12	13	11	12	7	13	6	12	2	13	12	3	11	13	4	5	12	8	13
Bury . . . 2½	8	8	6	8	8	7	8	5	8	1	3	8	8	10	6	8	8	5	8	8	3	8	8	4	8
Oldham . . . 10½ 2½	4		1		4		3				8		4		3		4		3		8		4		3
Whitworth . . 6		3				4				6				4				7				3			
Lanehead . . 6				4				6	4			5				7				3				4	
Lowerplace . . 6				3				4				6				5				7				3	

PREACHERS

1. John Ashworth
2. J. Rudman
3. J. Taylor
4. J. Wilkinson
5. J. Driver
6. J. Peel
7. J. Wilkinson
8. E. Grundy
9. J. Grime
10. W. Browne
11. J. Robinson
12. J. Pollard
13. R. Hudson

Heap, near Bury. He was educated at Rotherham Independent College and called to the New Street Congregational Church, Kendal, on the 29th July 1801. Nine years later he adopted Unitarian and Baptist opinions. Thereupon he withdrew from the Congregational ministry and established a church of Unitarian Baptists in Kendal. His flock was apparently small and his salary in proportion, for at this time he had an earthenware shop in the town.[1] In 1817 he resigned his ministry on account of ill health and retired to a small estate which he inherited at Heap Fold, Heap, near Bury. On the 22nd June of the same year he preached the Sunday School Sermons at Newchurch.

The Cause at Bury was shortlived and its site uncertain. At the Rochdale meeting of the Methodist Unitarians, 30th April 1818, Messrs Grundy and Kay reported that " they had been obliged to discontinue

[1] Nicholson and Axon. *The Older Nonconformity in Kendal*, p. 397.

worship in their room at Bury, from the family being ill of typhus fever. They found it exceedingly difficult to procure a suitable place for service, but thought they could build what was required for £300, and that a thriving congregation could be raised independently of, and without at all interfering with, the highly respectable Unitarian congregation long established in the town."

It is possible that the Bury Movement owed its inception to the Rev. Wm. Allard, minister of Silver Street Chapel (1803-1830), a friend and supporter of the Methodist Unitarians, who soon after his settlement at Bury commenced " monthly preaching, sometimes on a Thursday, and sometimes on a Sunday night, at Heap Fold and Moss-side with good success." Richard Wright, when he visited Bury in 1812, besides preaching in " a long room " and in the Presbyterian chapel, conducted services once at Heap Fold and once at Catshole.

It is not known when the Bury station ceased to be affiliated with the Methodist Unitarian Movement, but traces of the connection may perhaps be seen in the report, as late as 9th January 1847, of a cottage tea-party one and a half miles from Bury, consisting of those who attended the Unitarian services there. The walls, it is stated, " were hung with the likenesses of the three worthy ministers of Padiham and Newchurch."

In 1819 James Kay was appointed minister of the Unitarian congregation at Hindley, near Wigan. Two years later he emigrated to America, where he served as minister of the Unitarian church in Northumberland, Pennsylvania, for twenty-five years.

The Oldham congregation was formed in 1812, after the visit of Richard Wright, the Unitarian missionary to the town. According to Wright's statement (2nd December 1812), " the Unitarians at Oldham left the Methodists a few years ago and became Universalists," and Goodier, in *The Monthly Repository* for June, 1813, said of the members of the new congregation : " They unite the zeal of the Methodists to the information and

liberality of the Unitarians." The origin of the Oldham congregation helps, therefore, to explain its later inclusion in the Methodist Unitarian circuit.

On the 23rd May 1813 a room described as " large and convenient " was opened for Unitarian worship by the Rev. James Brooks of Hyde. The room was a third-story garret known locally as the " Pigeon Cote," approached from the street by a flight of stone steps to the second story and by a flight of wood stairs inside the building. The services were conducted for some time by Benjamin Goodier and other local preachers. Benjamin Goodier (1793-1818) was the son of John Goodier, a Failsworth weaver connected with Dob Lane Chapel. As a boy of six he made good use of the chapel library, of which, in his twelfth year, he was appointed librarian. He became an enthusiastic Unitarian, and established about 1812 a Sunday school and a Meeting for Religious Improvement at Dob Lane. In doctrinal discussions with Methodists and Swedenborgians he acquitted himself so well that a subscription was raised in order to take him from the loom and educate him for the ministry. Accordingly, after some preparatory instruction by the Rev. David Jones, his minister, he entered, on the 21st April 1813, the short-lived academy, founded in 1812, under Robert Aspland. His character and ability won the highest praise of tutors and fellow-students. Whilst at college he continued to interest himself in the Oldham congregation, and, largely through his efforts, the chapel was built in Lord Street, costing £600, which was opened on 4th January 1816. The Trust Deed, dated 14th March 1817, is almost identical in its terms with that of Clover Street Chapel, Rochdale, drawn up almost eleven months later. It provides for promoting at Oldham " the Christian religion as professed by Protestant Dissenters of the denomination of Unitarian Christians, sometimes called Socinians, and sometimes Anti-Trinitarians, holding and preaching the doctrine that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Plate IV

OLDHAM MEETING ROOM

To face page 46

Christ, God subsisting in one mind and in one person, is the only true God." It was one of the first Unitarian chapels built after the royal assent was given (21st July 1813) to the "Act to relieve persons who impugn the doctrine of the Holy Trinity from certain penalties."

Unhappily in the summer of 1814 Benjamin Goodier exhibited symptoms of pectoral disease, and as a consequence his course of study was shortened. In April, 1816, he became the first minister of the Oldham congregation, but was compelled to cease preaching in the summer of the same year. Late in 1817 he was ordered to the south of France, and died at Montauban on 23rd July 1818, at the early age of twenty-five. "Such was the respect and affection that his gentle virtues and Christian piety had created," says Aspland, "that his remains were followed to the grave, not only by all the resident English of the place, but by all the professors of the college, by the students, and by the Protestant ministers of Montauban." [1]

Benjamin Goodier was greatly influenced by the Methodist Unitarians, as is shown by a letter written by him a few days after the application of the Newchurch congregation to the Lady Hewley Fund. Two months later, as already stated, he spent three days on a visit to the Rochdale and Rossendale societies, and in 1816 and 1818 he contributed to *The Christian Reformer* "A Narrative of the Expulsion of Mr Cooke of Rossendale by the Methodists." It was therefore natural and fitting that the Oldham congregation, after the retirement of Goodier, should join the Methodist Unitarian circuit. At this station James Wilkinson chiefly took charge, tramping, as often as he was planned, between Rochdale and Oldham.

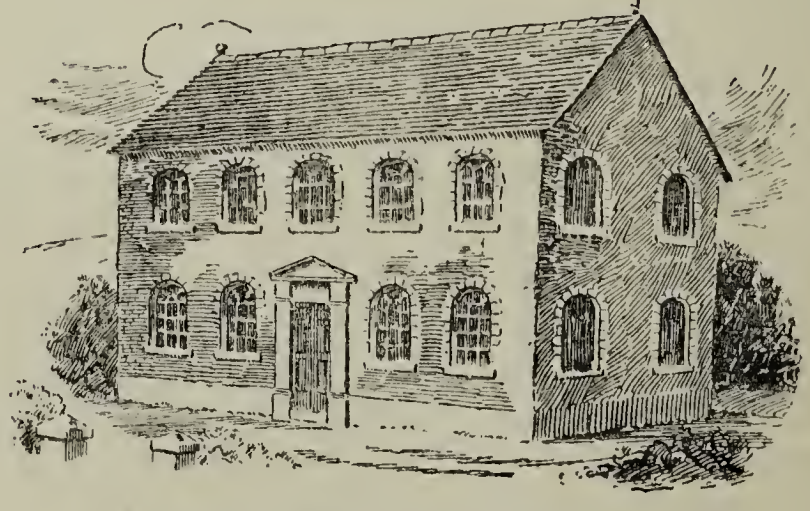
The early promise of the congregation was not fulfilled. Notwithstanding the efforts of the Methodist Unitarian preachers, supported a little later by those of the Lancashire and Cheshire Unitarian Missionary Society, the Cause

[1] *Memoir of Robert Aspland*, p. 326.

did not flourish. A hostile critic, Richard Slate, writing in 1825 (*Manchester Socinian Controversy*), observed: "The preacher and the whole of his congregation have been seen conducting their worship all in one pew." Three years later, however, James Wilkinson was able to report that "forty sittings had been taken within the last few months." But the revival did not prove to be permanent.

Several of the principal members of the congregation had emigrated to America to escape prosecution for their political propaganda. No preacher was resident in the town, and a considerable debt remained on the building. From 1829-34 the chapel was let to the Roman Catholics, from 1834-39 to seceders from the Wesleyan Methodists who sympathised with the Rev. Joseph Rayner Stephens of Ashton-under-Lyne, one of the leaders in the Anti-Poor Law agitation and a prominent Chartist, expelled from the Methodist Conference in 1834 for his connection with the movement for Church disestablishment.

A small body of Unitarians continued to meet in a garret in Henshaw Street till 12th July 1840, when the chapel, repaired and beautified, was reopened for Unitarian services. John Ashworth, as missionary of the Manchester Unitarian Village Missionary Society, again preached there at regular intervals, until a minister was appointed in 1843, since when the succession of independent ministers has been uninterrupted.



Lord Street Chapel, Oldham

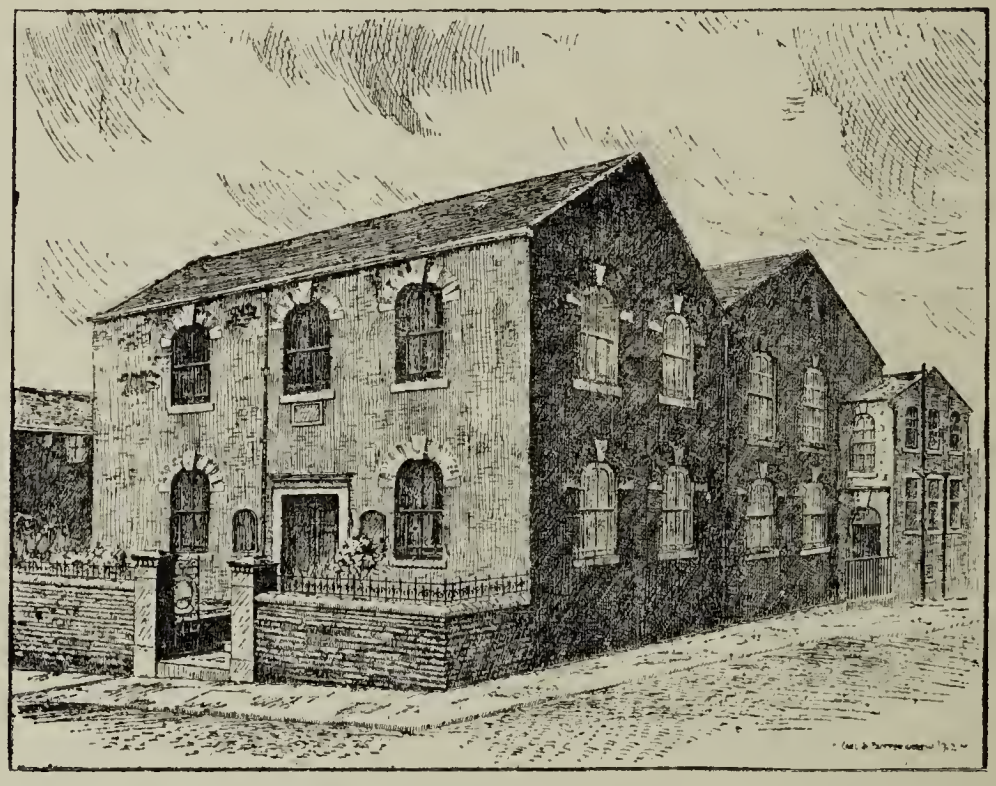
CHAPTER III

THE METHODIST UNITARIAN MOVEMENT (1818-1837)

The Annual Meeting of the Methodist Unitarian Association in 1818 was held at Rochdale on the 30th April. As the room in Drake Street used for worship was too small for such a gathering, Blackwater Street Chapel, by the courtesy of its minister and congregation, was used as the place of meeting. Amongst the speakers was Dr John Thomson, of Halifax, who died of typhus fever eighteen days later in Leeds. A white marble monument—the work of Sir Francis Legatt Chantrey, the famous sculptor—was erected by public subscription in the Northgate End Chapel to this friend of the Methodist Unitarians.

Two notable events in the history of the societies belong to this year—namely, the opening of the new chapel at Rochdale and the visit of Richard Wright to the circuit. The Rev. T. P. Spedding admirably described the situation and character of the chapel in *The Monthly Messenger* of July, 1888. The name "Clover Street Chapel" was given it from the clover croft which lay beyond it. The chapel was built of brick. "High up, over the entrance, a stone was affixed in the wall, announcing the building as a 'Unitarian Chapel.' There was plenty of light admitted by large, square windows, above and below." "The interior of the chapel had not much to recommend it, either from an architectural or an artistic point of view. A deep gallery ran round three sides of the chapel, and the pulpit, which was entered by a staircase, stood against the remaining wall. The gallery was capable of seating over two hundred people. The pews were high-backed and

narrow, and were painted a dull brown. There were no pews in the body of the chapel, which was used as a Sunday school; but wide desks were fastened to the walls for the scholars, of whom there were two hundred. A low platform was erected in front of the pulpit, and



Clover Street Chapel

here were the 'Singing Pew' and the benches for the instrumentalists. There was neither organ nor harmonium, but brass instruments and violins were plentiful, and players too. The walls were covered with a yellow wash, and the square windows were filled with small panes of glass. The floor was flagged, and in the centre of the chapel stood a large stove, which served the double purpose of heating the chapel and warming the dinners of the scholars and worshippers who attended from a distance. The building was lighted by oil lamps. Attached to the chapel was a small vestry, devoted to all the minor purposes of the congregation, and affording a receptacle for whatever could not be stored away under

the pulpit. The general aspect of the place betokened poverty." In many respects the description serves to indicate the general features of the chapels in the Methodist Unitarian circuit. Clover Street Chapel was formally opened on the 2nd August 1818, when Richard Wright preached afternoon and evening.

Richard Wright (1764-1836) was the itinerant missionary of the Unitarian Fund, a missionary society established in 1806, which was amalgamated with the earlier Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (1791) and the later Unitarian Association (1819) to form the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. In the words of the Rev. Alexander Gordon, Wright was " a man of real pith and popular power, who carried Unitarian doctrine from Land's End to John o' Groats." [1] Sprung from the ranks, a convert from Calvinism, he was well equipped by nature and experience to stimulate and encourage the Methodist Unitarians, amongst whom he laboured with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction.

His visits in the circuit were narrated in *The Monthly Repository*, the first regular Unitarian periodical in England, established in 1806 by Robert Aspland, the secretary of the Unitarian Fund.

Rochdale.—In his account of the opening of Clover Street Chapel, Rochdale, Richard Wright states that all the seats in the gallery, supposed to hold two hundred and fifty persons, were taken. He described the congregation and school, adding: " Within three miles of Rochdale, in the hamlets and villages round, they have rooms for occasional preaching, where they deliver evening lectures, by which means they are likely to keep their chapel in the town filled on a Sunday." Commenting on proposals which had been set on foot to unite the Rochdale society with the Blackwater Street Church, he observes that " the two chief ministers concerned, the Rev. G. W. Elliott and Mr John Ashworth, were in favour of the amalgamation, but the late followers of

[1] *Heads of English Unitarianism*, p. 48.

Cooke, who had long been a separate society, had made their way to their present views together, had suffered persecution together, had their peculiar habits and feelings, and wished to remain together a separate society, and that, if they did not build a chapel, they must build a room for their Sunday schools." "Had a union been effected," he concludes, "it appears to me very doubtful whether it would have been a permanent one owing to the different habits of the people, style of preaching, and plans of procedure to which they had been accustomed."

In other words, the Methodist spirit in the Rochdale society clung tenaciously in 1818 to its own forms of expression, and was much too vigorous to suffer extinction within the staid and sober methods, discipline and worship of an old established Unitarian congregation of Presbyterian origin and traditions. It may even be doubted, from John Ashworth's reference to the suggested amalgamation in *The Monthly Repository* of 1818, whether he was ever whole-heartedly in favour of the scheme.

The Trust Deed of the new chapel, dated 30th April 1818, was devised for promoting at Rochdale "the Christian religion as professed by Protestant Dissenters of the denomination of Unitarian Christians, sometimes called Socinians, and sometimes called Anti-Trinitarians, holding and preaching the doctrine that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is to say, God, subsisting in one mind and one person, is the only true God; and for enabling the professors of the same religion of the denomination aforesaid more conveniently to exercise the forms of their religious worship and other ordinances of their persuasion."

The tour of Richard Wright in 1818 amongst the Methodist Unitarians included, in addition to Rochdale, Meanwood, Lowerplace, Burnley, Padiham, Newchurch, Rawtenstall and Todmorden.

Burnley.—Of Burnley he writes: "A few Methodist Unitarians reside here; I preached in a room to an

attentive audience. There has been Unitarian preaching occasionally in this town."

The last sentence needs to be expanded. Joseph Cooke held services at Burnley from 1806 until shortly before his death in 1811, visiting the town on Tuesdays after preaching at Padiham on the Monday. John Ashworth for many years followed the same practice; and Burnley is included with Padiham in the Plans of 1816 and 1817. Little progress, however, was made at Burnley until in 1837 a room was acquired for worship and opened on the 3rd March in that year. The opening services, morning, afternoon and evening, were conducted by Messrs George Buckland and John Ashworth, and attracted congregations of two and three hundred. As the room was not sufficiently large to accommodate such a crowd, the services were held in an unoccupied room of a cotton factory lent for the purpose. But Burnley constantly disappointed the hopes of its friends. Next year John Ashworth thus contrasted it with Padiham. " At Burnley the people are more intelligent and cautious, but less zealous than at Padiham; at the former place they are not now more in number than they were twenty years since; at the latter they are at least five times more."

Ultimately the Cause at Burnley was abandoned. The present church, dating from 1858, owes its existence to Padiham Unitarians who had moved into the town.

Padiham.—Of Padiham Richard Wright observes: " In this manufacturing village there is a society of Methodist Unitarians, who meet together, and instruct and edify one another; Mr Ashworth and others occasionally visit and preach among them; they meet in a pretty large room, but it is too small. The people are all poor. I preached to a crowded audience and should have had more hearers if the room would have contained them." " Mr Horsfield [Wright's colleague] also preached at Padiham to a crowded audience, and many came who could not get into the place."

Rawtenstall. — Of Rawtenstall the missionary writes: "This is also a village in Rossendale about two miles from Mr Ashworth's residence. Here is a small Baptist congregation and a neat little chapel. The people were formerly Antinomians, but the good old man, their minister, and a number of his hearers, are now Unitarians. I was the first openly avowed Unitarian minister who had been admitted to their pulpit. The chapel was well filled. The minister's name is Ingham. I hope Mr Ashworth will get more intercourse with him and his people, for which he is anxious."

The origin of the congregation at Rawtenstall—John Ashworth always spelled it "Rattenstall," as it is still pronounced by the natives—is somewhat obscure. William Jessop, in his *History of Methodism in Rossendale* (1880), makes the following reference to the chapel:— "About the year 1760 a chapel was built in Rawtenstall Fold by Mr George Whitaker for his son Richard. It was intended for the service of the Independents, but in the days of the Rev. John Ingham, who had succeeded to the charge, Antinomian doctrines were introduced. The congregation afterwards lapsed into Unitarianism." [1] In this notice there appears to be little that is correct. In favour of the Independent origin of the congregation there is the evidence adduced by the Rev. Richard Slate in *The Manchester Socinian Controversy*, published 1825: "The Trust Deed of this chapel bears the date May 17 1760. It states that the meeting-house erected there is put into trust for the use of Protestant Dissenters, distinguished by the name of Independents, so long as there are and shall be a minister to preach in it, and a congregation to meet in it, that can and shall subscribe unto a book of articles made, owned, confessed, and subscribed unto by the present congregation and members of this church, entitled 'An answer to every one that asketh a reason for the hope that is in us.'" [2]

The book of articles mentioned has been lost, but

[1] P. 91. [2] P. 153.

Plate V

RICHARD WRIGHT

RAWTENSTALL CHAPEL

To face page 54

there is a reference to it in the *Regester Book* of Richard Whitaker, the first minister of the chapel : " The number and names of those who are joynt in the fellowship of the truth, and those who subscribed our confession of faith this 1st day of Novemb. 1766." Then follows a list of thirty-two persons.

In The *History of Cloughfold Baptist Chapel*, by A. J. Parry (1876), a different account of the chapel is given : " A proof that the church [Cloughfold Baptist] continued to hold these views [modern Calvinism] . . . at least up to 1760, is the fact that in that year a small section of it with ultra leanings seceded, and formed a church at Rawtenstall, the original of the present Unitarian church." [1]

A tradition, still current, supported by Richard Wright's reference to it as " a Baptist congregation " in 1818 favours the view that the old chapel was originally Baptist. The *Regester Book* bearing the date 2nd May 1757 contains some passages relevant to this discussion. It gives the names of the children born at Rawtenstall and " named " by Richard Whitaker, as well as " the names of some person's children that were baptized in the Estabd. Ch. of Eng., but since have been otherwise minded concerning Baptism." Another reference to baptism runs : " July 3 1770—I baptized the 9 following persons," followed by the names.

Both theories of origin agree in one point which Whitaker's *Regester Book* fully proves—namely, that the theology of the first members of the chapel was High Calvinism or Antinomianism, a doctrine which was not introduced, as Jessop supposed, " in the days of the Rev. John Ingham." It may have been due to its doctrinal exclusiveness that John Wesley, who visited Rawtenstall in 1766, never preached in the chapel, then the only place of worship in the village.

The third and most probable theory of the origin of the old chapel, set forth in 1903 by the late Rev. Jenkyn

[1] P. 116.

Thomas, is that it was established through the influence of George Whitefield, who was in Rossendale in 1749, and visited Balladen, the home of George Whitaker and Richard his son. In his sermon notes Richard Whitaker mentions William Allt and his preaching in Rawtenstall and the surrounding district in July, 1757. The Rawtenstall minister apparently held the visiting preacher in high esteem, and purchased from him "100 Dialogues, 19 hymn books and 24 chatichisms." Allt, according to the Rev. Alexander Gordon, is the author of a Calvinistic pamphlet entitled *The Gibeonites of this Day Discovered.* An account of mission services by him is given in an extract from a letter of his quoted by Tyerman in his *Life of Whitefield.* We may therefore infer, with Mr Jenkyn Thomas, that the William Allt mentioned by Richard Whitaker lived at Hinckley, was a follower of Whitefield, an Antinomian in his views, that he travelled on missionary expeditions and organised the congregation at Rawtenstall.

Of the opening of the chapel Richard Whitaker left this record : " Dec. 11th 1757 Chapel at Rattenstall was opened. First sermon preached in it from Psm. 27 and 4 verce by your servant for Jesus' sake, Richard Whitaker." The chapel was licensed as a Dissenting place of worship on the 12th January 1758. Richard Whitaker died on the 18th October 1782 and was buried in the " Great Seat " inside the old chapel. His relations with the Baptists must have been cordial, and it is probable that a section of Calvinists from Cloughfold Baptist Chapel joined the chapel a few years after it was opened. His first wife, who died on the 7th August 1761, was interred in the chapel, and her funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. Joseph Piccop, a moderate Calvinist and one-time minister of the Baptist Chapel in Bacup. Richard Whitaker himself preached on one occasion in Bacup for a High Calvinist congregation which had seceded from the Baptist Chapel there, and at the funeral of his father, 10th July 1767, the service

was conducted by " Tho. Clatton," presumably to be identified with Thomas Clayton, then minister of the Cloughfold Baptist Chapel.

The book of articles mentioned in the Trust Deed of the chapel, according to Slate, was in 1825 in the possession of John Ingham, the second minister of the chapel, who confessed that he did not believe the doctrinal sentiments therein contained. " When he came thither," says Slate, " he professed to be of orthodox sentiments, but about seven years since he acknowledged himself to be what is known by the term Unitarian." John Ingham was minister at Rawtenstall for no less than fifty years, from October, 1782, until his death, 27th July 1833, in his eighty-third year. He was baptized by Richard Whitaker on 24th April 1775, when he was twenty-five years of age; and under the heading, " The names of Church members under the pastorall care of Richard Whitaker and Margaret his wife," is the entry, dated 7th May 1775, " John Ingham and Mary, his wife."

It is interesting to notice that the first minister of the chapel at Rawtenstall associated his wife with him as exercising " pastoral care " over the members of his church.

Mr Jenkyn Thomas remarks : " It is generally believed that the Newchurch Unitarian Movement had no direct influence on the Rev. John Ingham and his congregation. . . . There are three entries in the baptismal register by John Ashworth, probably of Newchurch, on July 2nd 1837. A branch of the Unitarian Methodists was established at Rawtenstall, and it is estimated that some of the adherents joined the Unitarian church later on, when that movement ceased to exist." [1]

Both statements are incorrect. John Ingham was brought over to Unitarianism through reading Ashworth's writings, and, apart from the chapel in the Fold, there was no branch of the Methodist Unitarians in Rawtenstall.

[1] *Rawtenstall Unitarian Church. Historical Notes*, p. 19.

At the meeting of the Methodist Unitarian Association held at Rawtenstall on 29th May 1828 John Ashworth congratulated the Association on assembling for the first time at Rawtenstall, when he had had " the satisfaction to hear from Mr Ingham that to him [John Ashworth] they owed their present views ; as his separation from the Methodists and the publication of his opinions had led Mr Ingham to a further examination of the Scriptures, from which he had derived so much consolation that he could now repose in his God as a God of mercy and a God of love."

John Ingham's conversion to Unitarianism must therefore be dated between the publication of Ashworth's *Letters* in February, 1817, and the visit of Richard Wright to Rawtenstall about August, 1818, when the Rawtenstall minister would be in his sixty-eighth or sixty-ninth year.

There is a tradition that some of the members, relatives of the first minister, seceded at this time and joined the Baptists. Apparently the congregation was divided in opinion. Richard Wright's words suggest that the minister did not carry all his hearers with him. The same inference may be drawn from a statement made by John Ashworth in 1845 that " when they became Unitarian, the members of the congregation did not number ten, whilst now they are at least seventy, and are steadfast and immovable." An undated incident may belong to this period that " John Hopkinson locked the chapel doors, and was missing at the time announced for the meeting, for he feared for the consequences had the contending parties met that day." John Hopkinson was the father of Elijah Whitaker Hopkinson, a descendant of the Rev. Richard Whitaker, who became one of the first students of the Unitarian Home Missionary College, established 1854.

John Ingham, according to a description by his granddaughter in 1903, was a thin, alert and sharp man, clean shaven and of medium height. He lived on a farm at

Crawshawbooth until too old to attend to it, when he retired to a private house. He greatly rejoiced in the freedom of the faith of his old age, and in 1831 the octogenarian sent a message to the Methodist Unitarian Association declaring " the delight he experienced in the change of opinion was inexpressible "—he compared it to a " change of residence from a cold, bleak hut, surrounded by rushes and ling upon a mountain, to a delightful dwelling in a sunny valley surrounded with the most beautiful flowers."

Todmorden.—Of his visit to Tormorden in 1818 Richard Wright gives a lengthy narrative. He does not notice, however, previous Unitarian efforts in the village. Joseph Cooke had preached from time to time in Todmorden, and in 1815, as John Ashworth tells us, " a party left the Methodists, having embraced the doctrines for which Mr Cooke was expelled." These Cookites pursued the same path as their brethren in Rochdale and Rossendale, for Richard Wright found that Unitarian literature was circulating freely amongst them.

The precise connection of the Todmorden disciples of Cooke with the Methodist Unitarian Movement prior to 1818 is not clear, but John Ashworth, writing in 1817, at least knew something of them. It is possible that the " James Driver " who figures as a Preacher on the Plans of 1812 and 1817 is to be identified with the man of the same name who is one of the first list of members of the Todmorden Unitarian Society of 1823, and described a little later as " of Littleboro'." In that case John Ashworth was in touch with the Cookites of Todmorden, and one of their number was a preacher, whose home in 1812 had been one of the Cookite stations.

Another line of connection with Cooke and his colleagues may be found in the person of John Fielden, afterwards famous as the Radical M.P. for Oldham. For many years he attended his father every Tuesday on the journey through Rochdale to Manchester to deliver cloth. " Winter and summer alike, they left home at

four in the morning, arriving back at midnight." [1] In 1811, the year of Cooke's death, John Fielden, then twenty-seven years of age, married a Rochdale lady named Ann Grindrod. A man of his inquiring, thoughtful disposition must have been interested in the controversy which led to Cooke's expulsion from the Methodist Connexion in 1806, and may even have heard him preach before his death, five years later. According to W. Stevens, the first minister at Todmorden (1823-1824), Richard Wright " visited Todmorden at the invitation of two or three individuals who had heard him preach at Rochdale " on the 2nd August 1818, at the opening of Clover Street Chapel. Of this deputation John Fielden was a member, and his name stands first in the list of members of the Unitarian society formed five years later.

Richard Wright himself states that he first heard of the Todmorden Unitarians from Messrs Astley and Elliott, the ministers of the Halifax and Rochdale chapels, and resolved to spend a Sunday with them. " To prepare the way for this, a plan was laid by the Rochdale friends to go on a week-day, and have preaching in the evening." A notice of this service was sent to Todmorden, and public notice given by printed bills. " Two gentlemen took Mr Elliott and me in a chaise, others went on horseback. I preached in the evening in a large room, a kind of warehouse, and had about two hundred hearers. Notice was then given of my being there the next Sunday but one " and of the subjects of the discourses. As a counter-attraction the orthodox congregations in the village introduced fresh preachers into their pulpits on that day, and one even changed the date of the " charity sermons " so as to hold them on that date. Notwithstanding all this, Richard Wright preached " in the same room as before " to a congregation of 300 in the morning, 500 in the afternoon (of whom 150 were outside the building) and 350 in the evening. He then arranged for the next Sunday's services to be

[1] J. Holden. *History of Todmorden*, p. 159.

conducted by his colleague, Frederic Horsfield (minister at Cirencester, 1820-1860), who also enjoyed large congregations, and the following Sunday by John Ashworth. " After I had spent a Sunday at Todmorden," continues Wright, " I had an opportunity of consulting with Mr Elliott, Mr Kay, Mr Ashworth and some others ; and it was judged that it might be practicable for the neighbouring ministers residing within twelve or fifteen miles to keep up a regular week-evening lecture there for a time, and to give assistance on a Sunday occasionally ; and that the people might be brought to meet among themselves and conduct religious services by reading, etc., at such times as they are without such assistance."

For several years services were held in a room in Hanging Ditch, and at the next meeting of the Methodist Unitarian Association, held at Newchurch on 4th June 1819, amongst the representatives from the various societies were several from Todmorden.

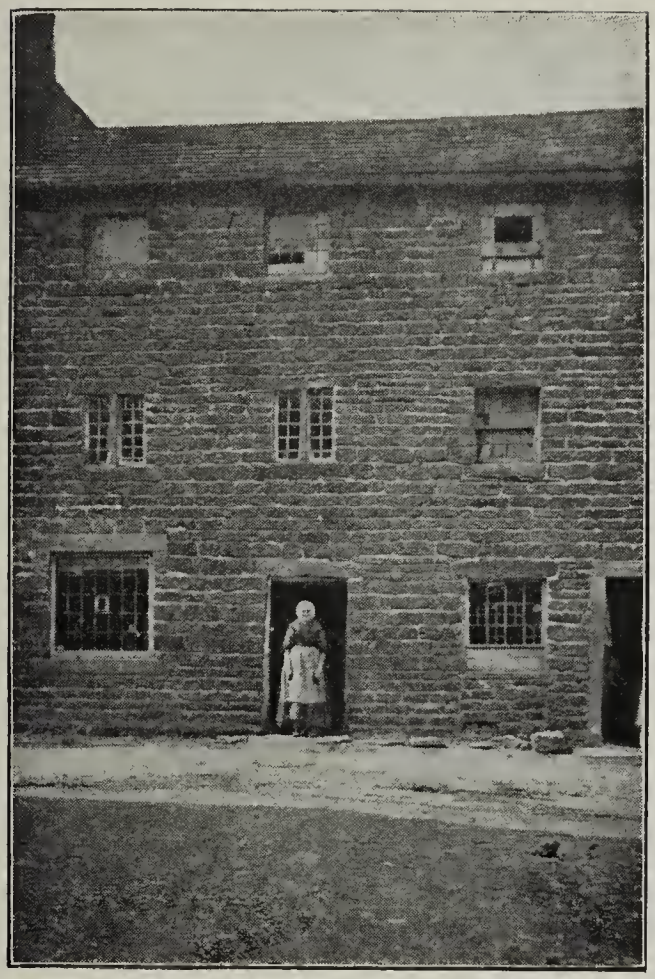
On the 28th May 1819 John Ashworth appealed to the Unitarian Fund for financial assistance for the Padiham congregation. The previous year the committee of the Fund had voted £10 to Padiham, which, with the exception of £1, was devoted to the payment of the rent for the meeting-room and the defraying of expenses of entertainment for the visiting preachers. " I go and preach to them," said Ashworth, " once a month on a Monday night, and two poor, good men talk as they can on the Lord's Day to from fifty to sixty persons as poor as themselves. Perhaps you at London will not know what I exactly mean by the word ' poor.' I will tell you. It is the master of a family not being able to earn more than 7s. a week, even though he may have two, three, or four children that cannot work."

At Newchurch the Methodist Unitarians steadily increased in numbers and prosperity, and in the spring of 1822 enlarged their chapel at a cost of £154, raised partly by the congregation, partly by grants from various fellowship funds.

The meeting of the Methodist Unitarian Association at Padiham on the 30th May 1822 was remarkable in more than one respect. The room where the society met being too small for such an assembly, the services were held in the open air. Five ministers took part, and in the evening, when the Rev. George Harris preached, it was estimated that the congregation numbered a thousand. In making his report at the Business Meeting of the progress of the society at Padiham, John Robinson observed : " We have had to fight with our lives in our hands." It was no mere rhetorical flourish. In view of the scheme for building a chapel in the village, launched at the Association Meeting a year earlier, a prominent Methodist had bought up the available land in the vicinity, and only with difficulty was a site secured. The committee appointed to execute the plan for building consisted of the Rev. George Harris, Messrs Ashworth, Taylor and Robinson. The estimated cost was £350. Encouraged by the meeting of the Association, next day, Saturday, 1st June, the Padiham congregation assembled in a body to dig with their own hands the foundations for the new chapel. On Monday the 3rd June the foundation stone was laid, amidst an immense concourse of spectators, to whom the Rev. Henry Clarke delivered an address. A substantial response to an appeal for help was made by Unitarians throughout the country, and when the chapel was opened, 22nd June 1823, by the Revs. John Grundy, of Manchester, and Robert Cree, of Preston, £267 had been received towards the cost of building, including £31, 10s. raised by the congregation, and collections amounting to £17, 5s. 6d. taken up at the opening services.

It is said that " while the chapel was in the course of construction, the builders at the beginning found the opposition to be very bigoted, even to the extent of shameful interference. What they succeeded in doing during the day-time would be found undone, to their disappointment, in the morning. So the so-called

Plate VI



MEETING ROOM, PADIHAM

NAZARETH CHAPEL, PADIHAM

To face page 62

heretics had to provide watchmen from among themselves to ward off the invader of the night, and in this way the persecutors were again conquered in their malicious intentions." [1]

Stone stairs were built into the walls of the chapel in preparation for the galleries added in 1836. Originally there were no pews in the building, but only forms, which served to accommodate both the worshippers and the Sunday school scholars. Above the door at the entrance was a stone with the following inscription on it :—

TO US THERE IS BUT
ONE GOD EVEN THE
FATHER
1822

Not until fourteen years later was a burial ground attached to the chapel. The owner of the land on which the chapel stood lodged a complaint that there had been encroachment " beyond the boundary agreed upon, and that the chapel faced the wrong way." After some negotiations it was agreed, by way of compensation, that an addition of 14s. 2d. be made to the ground rent, making it £10 a year. Among the Trustees appointed were William Johnson Fox (afterwards M.P. for Oldham, 1847-1863), James Taylor, John Ashworth, George Harris, James Pollard and John Robinson. The chapel was held in trust " as a place of religious worship by the society of Protestant Dissenters of the denomination called Unitarian." Nazareth Chapel, as it was called, by a curious coincidence was built on the site of an old thatched cottage formerly tenanted by James Hunter, the first convert to Methodism in Padiham, whose home was the meeting-place of the first Methodist society (formed in 1748) in the town.[2]

[1] *History of Unitarianism in Padiham,* p. 9.

[2] B. Moore. *History of Wesleyan Methodism in Burnley and East Lancashire,* p. 20.

The establishment on the 28th March 1823, at a meeting held at Chowbent, of the Lancashire and Cheshire Unitarian Missionary Society was an event of considerable importance to the Methodist Unitarians.

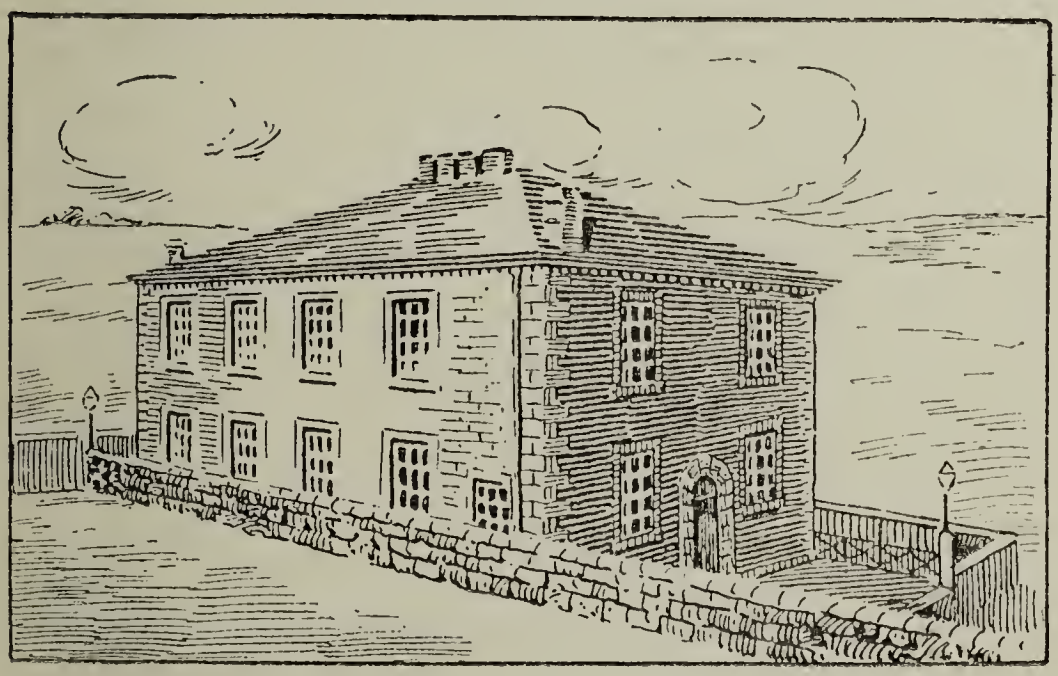
Todmorden and Oldham were included amongst the societies to which assistance was given, and John Ashworth, James Taylor and James Wilkinson were on the first Preachers' Plan. In 1831 the society, having regard to the geographical sphere of its operations, became the Manchester Unitarian Village Missionary Society. For three months in 1827 John Ashworth was a paid missionary for the Lancashire and Cheshire Unitarian Missionary Society, preaching on Sundays at four of the stations, and on Wednesday evenings at Middleton and Oldham. Though his services "met with success," he was compelled to resign on account of the claims of the Newchurch congregation, but continued his monthly services as heretofore at Padiham.

On the 23rd February 1823 the Methodist Unitarians of Todmorden organised themselves into a society "for the purpose of purchasing ground and erecting a building thereupon to be called the Unitarian Meeting House, wherein religious worship of one God in one Person shall be carried on, and a school be taught." One of the persons "appointed to take a conveyance of the said plot of ground," whose name heads the list of members, was John Fielden, of Dawson Weir. Elaborate rules were drawn up, including one relating to the ejection of immoral members, which concluded with the intention to adhere "to the rule laid down by our holy Master Jesus in Matthew, chap. xviii, verses 15, 16, 17."

The result of the society's labours appeared on Whit-Sunday, 6th June 1824, when the Unitarian chapel on Cockpit Hill was opened, the preachers being the Rev. Dr Nathaniel Philipps, of Sheffield (morning), the Rev. W. Stevens, late of Newport, I. of W. (afternoon), and the Rev. George Harris (evening).

The chapel was built of stone, resembling an amphi-

theatre in shape, and capable of seating four hundred people. The seats were raised one above another, the higher sittings being of sufficient elevation to admit of a room beneath, which might be used as a school or lecture room. A burial ground was attached to the chapel, and this ground, as well as that on which the chapel stood, was freehold. The cost of the building and site amounted to £990, 12s. 5d.; including



Unitarian Meeting House, Todmorden

£65 collected at the opening services, the congregation raised £407, 18s. 6d.

The sermon by the Rev. W. Stevens, entitled *Christ Crucified*, delivered "at the opening of the Unitarian Meeting House," was afterwards published. It is entirely doctrinal, with no reference to the occasion which, presumably, called it forth. The preacher was appointed minister of the new chapel. After no fewer than six ministers in the period from 1823 to 1837, James Taylor, of Rochdale, one of the original Methodist Unitarian preachers, was appointed, and began a pastorate which lasted fourteen years.

At the meeting of the Methodist Unitarian Association

at Todmorden the day after the chapel was opened a bright report of the prospects of the society was presented by its representatives, one of whom was John Fielden. Next year, at the Association Meeting at Newchurch, 26th May 1825, the Rev. Noah Jones, of Todmorden, was able to boast an increase in the number of members of the society, 120 scholars in the Sunday school, and announce the opening during the forthcoming summer of a day school for all denominations.

The year 1827 was one of great suffering in north-east Lancashire, and as many members of the society were actually in want of food and clothing, the Committee of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association endorsed an appeal to the Unitarian public to relieve the suffering. At the Annual Meeting of the Association, held at Padiham on the 6th June, grants of money and clothing were gratefully acknowledged.

At Padiham the ground rent of £10 a year was for long a heavy burden upon the society, and a debt of £152 remained on the chapel after it was opened. On the 7th August 1823 John Ashworth wrote in behalf of an appeal for aid: "The congregation, consisting principally of colliers and cotton weavers, is not overrated at 200, often much larger, and has raised £30 towards erecting the chapel, but the debt still upon it being too heavy for them to bear, I recommend their case to the benevolence of those whom their Heavenly Father has blest with more plenty than arises from weaving cotton or digging coals, begging that the words of the Lord Jesus may be remembered—'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" The effort, aided by friends like the Rev. John Grundy, reduced the debt to £75 by February, 1824, and not long afterwards it was altogether extinguished. One of the most generous benefactors of the Methodist Unitarians was Mary Hughes, of Bristol, the daughter of a clergyman, who was led to embrace Unitarianism through the conversion of her friend, the Rev. Edward Harries, of Hanwood, near Shrewsbury, who

resigned his living under the influence of the writings of Theophilus Lindsey.

In 1828 the society at Todmorden took a step fraught with momentous consequences for its future history. By resolution of the members all the property of the society was sold to John Fielden, of Dawson Weir, for the sum of £480, upon his undertaking to discharge its liabilities. The reasons for this act were weighty. Towards the end of the previous year the congregation had appointed as minister Mr Thomas Stewart, who was already in the employ of John Fielden as schoolmaster of his factory school. It was clear that the society could not maintain a minister entirely dependent upon the salary it could offer, and there was still a considerable debt on the chapel. Under the care of John Fielden the cause flourished, and it was to his memory that his three sons in 1865 raised the present church, one of the most beautiful Nonconformist churches in the country, at a cost of £53,000.

The curious correspondence which passed between Thomas Stewart and William Dawson, Secretary of the chapel, in November, 1827, relative to the appointment of the former as minister, shows considerable reluctance on the part of the prospective minister to pledge himself to " a continuation of such sermons, sometimes better, sometimes worse, but sometimes, too, original, as I am at present in the practice of delivering." Mr Stewart feared the double duties of minister and schoolmaster might prove too onerous for him. He concluded a lengthy epistle : " Although my thoughts are wholly averse to preaching, yet if any efforts of mine shall be deemed serviceable to your congregation, or to the cause for which I have (at one period of my life) forfeited every stay but heaven, I will supply you in sermons to the best of my ability. But I cannot entertain any specific engagement." It is not clear whether the claims of his school or the quality of his discourses led to the termination of Mr Stewart's ministerial connection with the

chapel, but his successor, Mr George White, was appointed in 1830.

The frequent assistance extended to the new societies by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association (established 1825), and the high hopes entertained of its future by the Methodist Unitarians, is reflected in the quaint sentiment honoured at their meeting at Newchurch on the 4th June 1829. " May it, like the grain of mustard seed, increase, shoot out wide, extending branches, and lodge under its protecting foliage the inhabitants of every quarter of the globe."

On the 5th May 1829 Trustees were appointed for land at Newchurch " acquired for a cemetery or place of Christian burial for the dead." John Ashworth is described, not as in 1809 as a weaver, but as a woollen manufacturer, and Jonathan Rudman as a Heald yarn manufacturer. Amongst the signatories are James Taylor, of Rochdale, hatter, and James Wilkinson, of Rochdale, shoemaker. The names here, as in all the Trust Deeds of the societies in the circuit, afford an evidence of the intimate connection of the preachers with all the chapels. Bethlehem Chapel, Newchurch, is now referred to as " the Unitarian Chapel," and the land is said to be " for the interment of corpses or dead bodies brought to the said chapel to be interred according to the rites and usages of the Unitarian Chapel of Great Britain." The land cost £160, of which the congregation borrowed £100, and raised the rest immediately.

During 1829 the Rev. J. R. Beard preached twice at Padiham to congregations of 300, once in the open air at Downham to 150 people, twice at Newchurch and three times at Rawtenstall. He was the worthy successor in Lancashire of the great Unitarian missionary, George Harris, and by word and deed rendered the Methodist Unitarian congregations conspicuous service.

From October to December, 1830, the Rev. Henry Clarke, missionary of the Lancashire and Cheshire Unitarian Missionary Society, was resident in Padiham. He

attended prayer meetings, still held in the homes of the members, and was much impressed by what he saw and heard. He set to work to relieve the society by raising £175 to purchase the ground rental of the chapel. He collected £120 for this object in Liverpool, and received substantial sums in Leeds and Chowbent. At Padiham he gave three lectures on astronomy in behalf of the Fund, which realised £4, 10s.; a chapel collection amounted to £1, 17s. 1d., and a subscription of ½d. each from the scholars in the school added 8s. 4d. Ultimately the amount required was raised.

On the 1st August 1821 the Rev. William Gaskell preached at Padiham in the morning, and in the evening a Public Meeting was held, over which the Rev. J. J. Tayler presided. The meeting was organised by the Manchester Unitarian Village Missionary Society. It had certain curious consequences. The Rev. D. Griffiths, a Burnley Baptist minister, attended the meeting, and on the following Sunday, as it was alleged, misrepresented what transpired at the gathering, and passed warm criticism upon Unitarians in general. The following evening the Rev. Henry Clarke addressed the inhabitants of Padiham in the open air in refutation of his statements. This led to arrangements being made for a public discussion in the Methodist Chapel, Padiham. John Ashworth and the Rev. Mr Harbottle, a Baptist minister, were appointed chairmen. The debate began at 9.30 A.M. The Trinity and the Deity of Christ were discussed until 1.30 P.M.; the meeting then adjourned until 3 P.M., when the Atonement and Future Punishment were debated. "At 7 P.M.," it is recorded, "a crowded and most attentive audience separated." The discussion excited great interest in Burnley, and the Rev. Henry Clarke preached there on Tuesday "in a large dwelling house filled almost to suffocation," and "again on the following Sunday in the open air to many hundreds."

In 1833 Dr Joseph Tuckerman, the friend and fellow-

student of Channing, visited England and quickened the conscience of many influential Unitarians with regard to the submerged classes in city slums. To Unitarians belongs the credit of originating the first mission to the poor in England. Manchester led the way in 1833. Other large cities followed. John Ashworth has the honour of having been the first Minister to the Poor in the country. His experiences amongst the poor Methodist Unitarians of Newchurch, Padiham, Rawtenstall and elsewhere stood him in great stead, though, as he said, " the depravity of large numbers in Manchester exceeds aught I have before saw." He opened a house for public worship and established a Sunday school, but in the main his work consisted in visiting the homes of the poor. The paper by Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth on *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes of Manchester in* 1832 presents a loathsome picture of the misery, poverty and vice with which John Ashworth was surrounded. In 1836 he resigned the appointment of " Minister to the Poor " in Manchester out of regard for the claims of the congregation at Newchurch, which had been compelled to seek pulpit supplies from the Manchester Unitarian Village Missionary Society. The poor amongst whom John Ashworth had laboured collected in pence the sum of £1, 17s., and presented him with a pair of silver spectacles as a mark of affection and esteem.

It was in this year (1836) that Nazareth Chapel, Padiham, was provided with the galleries for which the stairs had been made when the chapel was built in 1822. The pews in the galleries would accommodate 200 people, and the body of the chapel, which continued to be used as a Sunday school, would hold as many more when the occasion required. The reopening services were conducted by the Rev. J. R. Beard. Land adjoining the chapel was also acquired for a burial ground, and a sundial with the date 1836 and the inscription, " Believe every day may be the last," was built into the chapel wall.

At Newchurch in the same year a new organ, costing £55, was purchased, and at its opening the collection realised £21, 9s. 1d. Two years later an organ was purchased by the congregation at Padiham for the sum of £20 from the Bury Unitarian congregation.

The Annual Meeting of the Methodist Unitarian Association was held at Padiham on the 19th May 1837, when the speakers included John Ashworth, of Newchurch, James Taylor, of Rochdale, James Pollard and John Robinson, of Padiham. From this time on, although there is evidence that the various societies were still closely united in fellowship for some seven years more, the story is one not so much of a movement as of men —the men who began the movement, and with whose death it came at length to an end.

CHAPTER IV

THE METHODIST UNITARIANS (1838-1858)

About the year 1838 the organisation of the Methodist Unitarians, always somewhat fluid, began to dissolve and to be supplanted by what is known as Independency. For this many reasons lie just beneath the surface. The various societies within the circuit had by this time become recognised by Unitarian organisations of all kinds, and their polity subjected to the influence of men and societies, far and near, of different traditions and outlook, though holding generally the same doctrinal positions. For the last few years the Methodist Unitarian chapels had been in part at least supplied by the missionary societies which had their headquarters in Manchester. John Ashworth's appointment for a few months as Missionary for the Lancashire and Cheshire Unitarian Missionary Society, and for a longer period as the first Minister to the Poor in Manchester, deprived the Methodist Unitarians to some extent of his leadership during the tenure of these offices, and threw them into intimate fellowship with other preachers and churches than those of Methodist Unitarian traditions.

The construction of railways from Manchester to the various villages where the Methodist Unitarians had their stations broke down their isolation, and brought them into closer relations with the capital of the county. The line from Manchester to Littleborough was opened in 1839, and to Todmorden two years later ; whilst that from Manchester to Rawtenstall was completed on the 28th September 1846, and extended to Newchurch within two years.

The society at Todmorden, containing a few men of means, as early as 1824 enjoyed the services of a salaried minister. Amongst the Methodist Unitarians there was no periodic movement of ministers from one circuit to another, as in the parent Methodist Connexion. Consequently, in course of time the chapels near which the preachers lived, and which they chiefly served, came to regard the resident preacher as in a peculiar sense their minister. This view of the preachers was in a measure assisted by the slowly increasing prosperity of the societies, which naturally gave the benefit of their improving financial position to the minister with whom they were most intimately associated. At Newchurch, for example, John Ashworth's stipend, for many years but £10 a year, was first raised to £20, and in January, 1838, to £40 a year. The exceptionally long ministries of the Methodist Unitarian preachers also contributed to the loosening of the bonds of union between the societies: The first generation of members which had broken away from the Wesleyan Methodist circuit passed away and was succeeded by one with no personal ties to the older organisation and entertaining an increased respect for the venerable men who had so long ministered to the several congregations. The title of "Reverend" commonly accorded to the former Wesleyan Lay-Preachers during the later years of their ministry was expressive of an ecclesiastical development of which those who made use of it were hardly conscious.

Again, with the abandonment of the Association, the affairs of the individual societies were no longer subject to the collective oversight of an annual conference, and the sense of responsibility on the part of the circuit as a whole for the welfare and work of the various congregations slowly disappeared. Accordingly John Ashworth, in his disposition on the appeal of the Lady Hewley Trustees to the House of Lords in 1839, stated that "he was a Dissenter from the Established Church, and that he was not of any of the great classes of Dissenters, but

sometimes called a Cookite, but supposed he might be called an Independent, not that he belonged to the Independents, but because his congregation was independent of any other."

Nevertheless the history of the Methodist Unitarian chapels during the lifetime of Ashworth and his colleagues properly belongs to the story of the Movement which began in 1806. At Todmorden, from 1837 to 1851, James Taylor, of Rochdale, was minister, and at Rochdale, Newchurch, Padiham and Rawtenstall, so long as Ashworth, Taylor, Wilkinson, Pollard and Robinson lived, there were regular exchanges amongst the preachers. John Ashworth continued to visit Padiham and Rawtenstall at regular intervals, and when appointed in 1840 one of the missionaries of the Manchester Unitarian Village Missionary Society, he was made responsible for the preaching arrangements at these two stations, in addition to Newchurch, and preached at each of the two on one Sunday a month, his own pulpit being occupied by one of his old friends and helpers. These duties he discharged without a break until his death, twelve years later. At Rawtenstall his two chief colleagues were Edmund Ashworth, of Newchurch, and Edmund Taylor, of Cloughfold, who each conducted services there once a month. In 1843 Ashworth was entrusted with £25 by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association for distribution amongst the poverty-stricken members of the congregations under his care.

A letter from the year 1842, signed by John Robinson and James Pollard, still survives, attesting the pitiable poverty of these two preachers of the gospel. It expresses thanks for a gift of £5 and the promise of £10 each annually for the rest of their lives. The writer has occasionally forgotten his colleague, and his spelling is not so unimpeachable as his piety, but the simple pathos of his language is moving: " I could not tell how I might raise the rent for my cottage, but blessed be God for His providenshall care over those that trusts in Him.

This has often my wish, that my bed and cottage might be preserved for us while we live, and, freed from the poor-house, we fly to the happy reagens of life eternal hereafter. We remaine, sincarely . . ."

In 1844 John Ashworth reported on the continuance at Newchurch and Rawtenstall of the " meetings for prayer and conversation," when " the conversation was more homely and familiar than what is generally delivered from the pulpit." The society at Newchurch was now steadily increasing in numbers. In 1845 there was a regular congregation of 150 to 200, and a school of 200 scholars, " despite the attractions at the three orthodoxical chapels in the village of a constant change of ministers," who, said Ashworth, " exert all their powers to preach us down. Yet we live and thrive." " It is now," he adds, " thirty-seven years since about thirty of us left the Methodist connexion. Of these only eight remain, and three of them cannot walk to the chapel. The rest are gone to their long home, and I hope to a happy reward."

In 1850, at a cost of £16, Bethlehem Chapel was lighted with gas, and in the following year all the sittings in it were let.

At Rawtenstall, in 1848, a controversy between a Methodist and a Unitarian, in which John Ashworth took part, served to keep the principles of Unitarianism before the reading public of Rossendale.

Not only at Newchurch and Rawtenstall did the Methodist Unitarians meet with opposition. At Padiham, in 1840, on the Sunday before the Sunday School Anniversary, the incumbent of the Parish Church warned his Christian brethren against the blasphemous placards of the Unitarian charity, at the bottom of which they quoted the Apostle : " If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's." This, he declared, " was a lie." He closed with a warning : " If you go there to assist in bringing up these heretics, the very money which you contribute will rise up against you at

the judgment day." On the same day his Episcopalian brother at Higham proved to his own satisfaction that Cain was the first Unitarian because he slew his brother Abel. The only result of these attacks was that on the following Sunday, 21st June, when the Rev. Charles Wicksteed preached in Nazareth Chapel, the congregations and collections were considerably larger than usual.

A pleasant glimpse of the Methodist Unitarians about 1843 is afforded by a letter written by Travers Madge, then a student of Manchester College, which in many ways recalls that written twenty-eight years earlier by Benjamin Goodier, the Hackney College student. " Amongst the Methodist Unitarians with their hearty, country life, their earnest praying ways, their love of vigorous, unconventional, extempore preaching, their capacity for being wrought up into fever and enthusiasm, Travers Madge," as his biographer observes, " found himself more at home than in the ordinary type of Unitarian congregation." [1]

" On Sunday," wrote Madge, " I went to school at Rawtenstall in the morning. One of the congregation, who preaches sometimes, opened school, and, in his prayer, referred to me, and said, ' Be thou a present help to him ; be thou mouth and matter to him.' This little prayer I felt very much to strengthen me. They have as many children in the school as can possibly be taught. It is, however, a very small place ; I think quite the tiniest chapel I ever was in. . . . After dinner some half dozen of us walked over to Newchurch. . . . The chapel at Newchurch is much larger, and there is an organ in it. The gallery goes all round, and all the congregation is in it. The school is below. . . . The galleries were very well filled indeed. I suppose there must have been about 300 people, from what they said afterwards, and just the same simple-hearted people ; they seemed to be all joining heartily in the singing. . . . I had to give out the enclosed notices. (You will be glad to see a Sick Society.)

[1] Brooke Herford. *Travers Madge*, pp. 22, 23.

We drank tea at Mr Ashworth's and then returned home; he wanting to get to his cows in good time." On their way they visited an old woman "upwards of eighty-five," at whose request Travers Madge offered prayer. "This is only an instance of the love of prayer which distinguishes these people. . . . After prayer she talked to me a little about preaching, and especially advised me to go on extempore." Madge and his companions then went to a prayer meeting at the home of one of the members. "Before we left," he concludes, "they wished me again to pray, and one other young man prayed after me, and then we left."

The Rev. Brooke Herford, D.D., the friend and biographer of Travers Madge, afterwards the distinguished Unitarian divine, preached his first sermon, as a student of Manchester College, in the old chapel at Rawtenstall. After the service he was commended for the matter of it, but exhorted, in the quaint vernacular, "to put more fire in it."

Writing in 1868, Thomas Newbigging observed: "The musicians of Rossendale Forest are not of yesterday's growth—they are a venerable race and count their congeners back through the centuries. Our truest of Lancashire poets, Edwin Waugh, had them vividly before his mind's eye when he penned his droll story of *The Barrel Organ*. . . . But though they may be taken at a disadvantage with the formal and new-fangled 'squalling boxes' which are regulated by clockwork, and troll forth their music by the yard, as a carding engine measures out its sliver—place them before the glorious choruses of Handel and Haydn, and the melting melodies of Beethoven and Mendelssohn, and the creations of these masters in the empire of harmony find ready interpreters and strongly appreciative minds." [1]

What is here said of the inhabitants of Rossendale was true of the Methodist Unitarians in general. One of the members of the society at Newchurch, "indebted

[1] *History of the Forest of Rossendale*, p. 190.

for his education wholly to the Sunday school there," was the composer of a tune to which were sung the words of a hymn by Dr (afterwards Sir John) Bowring, familiar to members of Mechanics Institutes throughout Lancashire:

> "Mighty is the Power that gives
> Hope and bliss to all that lives."

The Rev. P. P. Carpenter preached the Sunday School Sermons at Padiham in 1844. He thus relates his experiences; "On Sunday morning we had a prayer meeting from 7-8 A.M., then breakfast; then the children and teachers walked through the town—this was necessary as the Orthodox denied they were so many. Then I addressed them at some length; after dinner, I talked with the people; then afternoon service, followed by tea and talk, and then evening service. I caused one of the old ministers to take part in the afternoon service, and the other in the evening. They have some families with great knowledge and taste for music, so that, except at York Minster, I don't know where I have heard the mass music better performed than here." [1]

A contemporary report adds that the choruses in question were taken from the works of Hummel, Haydn and Mozart. The quaint custom of presenting each of the children who took part in the procession with a bun was observed for many years at Padiham. It is probable that it arose in consequence of a real need on the part of the poor children connected with this society. On the evening before the anniversary Mr Carpenter, we learn, delivered a lecture on Temperance in the open air, when the new Temperance Band made its first appearance in the town.

The preacher visited Padiham a little later in the summer in the company of his brother and biographer, Russel Lant Carpenter, when a curious experience befell them. "The zealous people of Padiham thought it

[1] *Memoirs of P. P. Carpenter*, p. 63.

would be quite a scandal if two preachers should be in the town without any preaching, so the bellman was sent round, and, in our walking dress, we united in a service."

Like his intimate friend Travers Madge, of an evangelical cast of mind, Philip Carpenter was attracted by the Methodist Unitarians and they by him. In May, 1845, he preached the School Sermons at Newchurch. His brother writes: "He was intensely affected by the morning prayer meeting; the people's hearts having been deeply touched by the recent death of Emmanuel, their favourite teacher. The collection was their largest without begging." Two years earlier he had preached the Anniversary Sermons at Rawtenstall, and a little later in 1845 was at Todmorden. At Newchurch, he observes, "the people throw out no obscure hints of clubbing together, for me to labour among the three congregations." On one occasion twenty members of the Newchurch society made the journey to Stand to hear him in his own pulpit, "including a new-married couple on their wedding excursion to hear their favourite preacher."

On 12th February 1845 a memorial was addressed to Mrs G. W. Wood as a tribute to the services of her late husband, G. W. Wood, Esq., M.P. of Manchester, "in originating and laying the foundations" for the recently enacted Dissenters Chapels Act, which preserved to Unitarians their old chapels, and rendered impossible the threatened alienation of them as a result of the Lady Hewley case. Amongst the 3176 signatures of Lancashire Unitarians were those of John Ashworth and 80 members of the Newchurch congregation, John Robinson and James Pollard and 120 members of the Padiham congregation, and 58 members of the congregation at Rawtenstall. Probably the numbers indicate rather the adults at the three stations capable of wielding a pen than the exact numerical strength of the congregations.

During the "hungry forties" the Methodist Unitarians were often in distress. A sketch of the annual New Year's Party at Newchurch (1847), contributed to *The Inquirer* by John Ashworth, relates that "300 partook of tea in the chapel bottom." Scholars were charged 2d:, 3d. and 4d. according to age, and members of the congregation 6d. each. "The poorer members of the society were presented with free tickets. At these prices all had enough of the best bread and tea." The profit, 14s., was devoted "to some needful repairs for the chapel." "Every individual composing this tea-party," we are assured, "is of the class who get their bread by the sweat of their brow, four days a week is all the employment which they now have, and bread is very high." Doubtless "best bread and tea" without stint would be greatly appreciated by those whose food ordinarily consisted of oatmeal porridge and skimmed milk, soup and potatoes, with a scrap of meat or a dumpling occasionally, and a little bread and butter and tea to mark the advent of the Sabbath.

In 1848 died both the aged ministers, who for forty-two years had ministered without earthly reward to the poor Methodist Unitarians of Padiham. James Pollard died on the 19th October, aged eighty-two years, and John Robinson, surviving him only one month, died on the 14th November, at the age of seventy-three.

A memorial tablet erected in the chapel relates that "They founded this chapel in the midst of difficulties and discouragements, and were the faithful pastors of this congregation for more than forty years. As a humble tribute of respect for departed worth, and as a grateful memorial of their teachings and example, the congregation have erected this tablet."

The tablet was removed to the new chapel in January, 1874. A stained-glass window, the gift of Mrs Eli Whitehead, was erected in the present chapel in 1888, dedicated to the founders of the Unitarian Movement

in Padiham, and exhibiting portraits of John Robinson and James Pollard expounding the " Word."

On the 1st March 1851 John Ashworth, the leader of the Methodist Unitarian Movement, died at the age of seventy-two. He preached for the last time a few days before his death " to a deeply interested congregation " at Padiham, from the appropriate text : " No man liveth to himself alone."

A memorial tablet in Clover Street Chapel, Rochdale, records that he " for more than forty years was closely connected with this congregation, by regular interchange of pulpits, with the Revs. J. Taylor and J. Wilkinson. And, along with them, was early led, by the careful study of the Scriptures, to renounce the principles of Methodism in which they had been brought up, and adopt those of Unitarianism."

Another memorial tablet erected in the new chapel at Newchurch " by two sincere friends " (Mr and Mrs Richard Haworth) states that John Ashworth " from 1811 to 1851 was the faithful, earnest and beloved minister of the Unitarian congregation, Newchurch, which he zealously served without earthly reward."

In 1865 a stained-glass window was erected at the south end of the new chapel " to the memory of Joseph Cooke and John Ashworth."

James Taylor, who had been connected with Cooke and Ashworth from the beginning, died on the 11th September 1856, in the sixty-ninth year of his age. A memorial tablet in Clover Street Chapel, Rochdale, records that " for twenty-six years he preached faithfully the Unitarian doctrine in this Chapel, and afterwards for fourteen years was the minister of the Unitarian congregation at Todmorden."

James Wilkinson, the last of the faithful band of Cookite preachers, died on 9th May 1858, aged seventy-one. A memorial tablet at Rochdale records that " for upwards of forty-six years he ministered to the spiritual wants of this congregation, labouring earnestly and

devotedly for the spread of the Unitarian faith." At the foot is the text, singularly appropriate to one who followed his trade as shoemaker almost to the end of life: "Yea, you yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities."

It is significant of the intimate relations of the Methodist Unitarian congregations even in the middle of the nineteenth century that, as John Ashworth, of Newchurch, preached his last sermon at Padiham, so James Wilkinson, of Rochdale, preached his last sermon at Todmorden less than a fortnight before his death.

James Wilkinson and James Taylor lived long enough to see the first of the fine new churches of the Methodist Unitarians, that of Rawtenstall, opened 2nd October 1853 when the Rev. George Harris, the early friend of the societies, preached morning and evening, and the Rev. J. Cropper, of Stand, in the afternoon. On the following Sunday the pulpit was occupied by two distinguished ministers, James Martineau and William Gaskell, who, by a curious coincidence, preached from the the same text.

The passing away of the early disciples of Joseph Cooke marks the end of the Movement in which they had spent their lives. Henceforth the congregations which they had served with such rare fidelity appointed to their ministry trained ministers, and were independent in government and discipline. To-day the Methodist Unitarian chapels are amongst the largest and handsomest in the country, and their congregations excelled by none in vigour, numbers and devotion to the cause of Unitarian Christianity.

The Methodist Unitarian preachers were men of speech and action, not masters of the pen. The only one besides Cooke himself who left any literary remains was John Ashworth, and he always wrote with considerable reluctance. He was the author of *Ten Letters, giving an Account of the Rise and Progress of the Unitarian Doctrine in the Societies at Rochdale, Newchurch-in-*

Rossendale, and Other Places formerly in connection with the late Joseph Cooke (first edition, 1817; second edition, 1829; reprinted, 1870). In the Preface Ashworth modestly observed: "The Author feels no blush in acknowledging these Letters to be the offspring of untutored nature; not because he contemns learning and the arts of correct speaking and writing; no, these, though he does not possess them, he very much respects; but because his very humble lot in life has been such as never to afford him these advantages, which might have enabled him to send his offspring into the world in a more fascinating form; and he hopes this will be a sufficient apology for the coarseness of the dress."

The other publications of Ashworth were *A Scriptural Statement of Unitarian Doctrine*, a letter of twenty-eight pages "by One that was once a Methodist and a Weaver Boy," evoked by a controversy with a Rawtenstall Methodist in 1848, and *Remarks; or, a Compliance with the Inquirer's Request*, a pamphlet of forty-four pages addressed to a Haslingden Swedenborgian, undated, but apparently written before 1850.

For the title-page of the last-named work he borrowed the quotation from Dr Jortin used similarly by Joseph Cooke when publishing the sermons which led to his expulsion from the Methodist Connexion in 1806. It indicates the spirit which animated alike John Ashworth, the aged and convinced Unitarian, and Joseph Cooke, the youthful and fearless student of Scripture.

Methodist Unitarianism derived its doctrine from the Bible, its piety and its zeal from John Wesley. Its preachers, like the Apostles Peter and John, were "unlettered and non-professional men," but like the Apostles also in this regard, they spoke of "the wonderful works of God" in the language of the common people, and "gave themselves to their ministry" "unto the building up of the body of Christ."

CHAPTER V

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE METHODIST UNITARIANS

The government and discipline of the Methodist Unitarian circuit and of the societies within it was Methodist, with such variations from the practice of the parent body as were suggested by the peculiar circumstances of the congregations. In 1812 quarterly meetings of the circuit were contemplated, the date of one, 7th October, being given on the published Plan. It may be surmised that in so large a district as the new circuit quickly covered, amongst congregations largely composed of weavers and artisans, it was found impracticable, after the disruption in Providence Chapel, Rochdale, for the societies to hold quarterly meetings. In 1817 the conference of delegates from the societies was called the Association, and was announced to meet at Rochdale on Friday in Whitsun week. It was actually held on the 30th April 1818, and is described in *The Monthly Repository* as " the half-yearly meeting of the Rossendale and Rochdale Association of Unitarian brethren." Notwithstanding the name here incorrectly given, there was no break in the development of the Methodist Unitarian movement from the date of Cooke's expulsion from the Methodist Conference in 1806 ; and the societies which were in fellowship with him, with a few important additions, and a few unimportant exceptions, constituted the Association of Methodist Unitarians which existed until 1844.

The Annual Meeting of the Association, a Methodist Conference in little, was held at each of the various stations in turn on the Thursday or Friday in Whitsun

week. Two services were held, in the morning at 10.30, in the evening at 6, at each of which two preachers usually took part. No fees were paid to the officiating ministers, who were commonly recognised Unitarian divines outside the circuit. The Rev. John Ragland, of Hindley, preaching at Rawtenstall in 1828, was led by John Ashworth's intimation of the custom of the Association in this respect to take for his text Matthew x. 9, 10: "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey . . . for the workman is worthy of his meat." In the course of his sermon he remarked that "he liked the invitation to preach for the Association none the worse because it bore the marks of honesty on the face of it."

Some of the ministers who thus gave their services to the Association were compelled to travel considerable distances in order to reach the place of meeting. The evening service at Todmorden, 25th May 1820, was conducted by the Rev. James Taylor, of Rivington, who had ridden twenty-eight miles that day in order to be present.

No Unitarian minister interested himself more in the Methodist Unitarians than the eloquent George Harris. As a young man of twenty-three, then minister of Renshaw Street Chapel, Liverpool, he attended the Association Meeting for the first time at Newchurch, 4th June 1819, and he continued to take part in the meetings without a break until the Newchurch meeting, 26th May 1825, shortly before his removal to Glasgow. A resolution moved and seconded by James Taylor and John Ashworth expressed the thanks of the Association "to Mr Harris for his very able and useful services in the cause of Unitarianism in this country," and expressing "the sincere wish that every blessing may attend his labours wheresoever he be."

Amongst the subscribers to the *Lectures on Deism and Atheism* published by George Harris in 1823 were many Methodist Unitarians of Newchurch, Rochdale and

Padiham—a fact that testifies alike to the influence of the preacher in the societies, and to the interest of the Methodist Unitarians themselves in Unitarian literature.

The two sermons preached by George Harris at the Todmorden meeting, 25th May 1820, were both on one text—viz. Judges viii. 2: "Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer?" They formed the eleventh and twelfth lectures in the volume of lectures, *Unitarianism and Trinitarianism Compared*, published in September, 1820. The lectures made a great impression when delivered in Liverpool during the winter of 1819-1820, and were listened to with no less appreciation by the Methodist Unitarians at Todmorden. George Harris frequently constituted himself the bearer of donations from the Liverpool Fellowship Fund to the various chapels in the Methodist Unitarian circuit, and by his zeal and personal service rendered them invaluable assistance in many ways. The record of his preaching on the occasion of his visit in 1820 illustrates his energy. After delivering the two sermons already referred to at the Association Meeting on Whit-Friday, by request of Mr Christopher Rawdon, of Underbank, afterwards the founder of the Rawdon Fund, now known as the Ministers' Stipend Augmentation Fund, he preached on the Sunday morning and afternoon at the Myrtle Grove Independent Chapel, Eastwood, of which Mr Rawdon was a Trustee, his subject being *Illustrations of the Doctrine of Unitarian Christianity*. He then travelled to Rochdale, and preached at Clover Street Chapel in the evening, and on the following day to Newchurch, where he delivered his sixth sermon within four days at places a considerable distance from each other.

After the morning service at the Annual Meeting of the Methodist Unitarian Association dinner was taken at a neighbouring inn. The meal is described as "comfortable," "economical," "plain" or "inexpen-

sive." At Rawtenstall in 1828 it cost 1s. 6d. a head, "including every expense," which, we are assured, "enabled many of the poorer individuals to enjoy it, as such entertainment seldom falls to their lot in this neighbourhood." Newchurch next year did even better, for the dinner, "including ale," cost but 1s. 3d. each. The price was probably fixed with an eye upon the Newchurch crowd, who on an earlier occasion had been unable to pay the sum of 1s. 9d.

Until 1825 the business meeting of the Association was held in the inn, where dinner was provided, and brethren unable through poverty to share the joys of the table were admitted after the cloth was removed to take part in the business affairs of the circuit. At Newchurch in the year named the meeting was held in the chapel, and opened and closed with hymn and prayer—a practice afterwards always pursued, and approved as "imparting a fitting solemnity to the proceedings."

No president of the Association was elected, but one of the company, usually a visiting preacher for the day, was called to the chair. John Ashworth acted as convener, or secretary, but there is no record of any election of officers.

The report of the 1818 meeting illustrates the nature of the work of the Association. The names of the preachers were called to ascertain if they were disposed to continue their labours, and fourteen answered the roll-call. Then the representatives of the societies were asked to state any objections to the preachers as the names were called. In this instance no objection was raised, and all the preachers agreed to serve as they were planned, with the exception of Jonathan Rudman, of Newchurch, who stated at length his unwillingness to be appointed to preach in some particular place where, he said, they were tired of hearing him. Another preacher, J. Grime, wished his name to be omitted from the Plan, modestly declaring his abilities to be unequal to the discharge of the required duties.

In 1819 the Association resolved " that henceforth every society transmit to a Committee, now to be appointed, an account of its state and progress one week before the Annual Meeting." Such reports were submitted to the Association, and supplemented by remarks from the delegates present of the several societies. Building schemes at the various stations were naturally set forth in some detail, especially in their financial aspect.

More than once the meeting of the Association was held so as to synchronise with one of the great events in this history of the societies. At the Association Meeting held at Rochdale on 15th June 1821, after the reading of a report from Padiham, supported by a speech of John Ashworth on the poverty of the society and the inconvenience of its meeting-room, it was resolved that " if possible a small place of worship should be reared at Padiham in which a Sunday school may be taught." John Ashworth was appointed Treasurer of the Building Fund, and a collection immediately taken up in its behalf realised £12, 9s. 7d. In order to give a stimulus to the new scheme it was decided to hold the next meeting of the Association at Padiham.

In 1824 the Association was to have held its meeting at Newchurch, but at the request of the society at Todmorden the Newchurch friends agreed to allow the meeting to be held at Todmorden on Whit-Monday, 7th June, in order to follow the opening of the new chapel there on Whit-Sunday, and so interest a wider circle in the important event.

Not infrequently collections were taken up at the meeting of the Association in relief of distress amongst the members of the societies ; thus in 1825 the Newchurch meeting collected £6 in order to clear off the debt on the current account at Padiham, and three years later £2 was collected to relieve the severe poverty which then afflicted the members of that society.

A prominent feature of the Association Meetings was

the reading of reports from the Sunday schools connected with the societies in the circuit.

Occasionally Unitarian friends from congregations outside the circuit were admitted to sit and confer. In 1821 we read that " several members of the Presbyterian Unitarians were present, and appeared to take a lively interest in the business of the day." In 1824 two societies, not of Methodist origin, were by their own request affiliated to the Association—viz. the Greengate Society, Salford, and the Blackburn congregation. The latter after a brief history was dissolved. The former was the scene of the ministry of the Rev. J. R. Beard, for some time Honorary Secretary of the Lancashire and Cheshire Unitarian Missionary Society, and of its successor, the Manchester Unitarian Village Missionary Society, and in 1854 the first Principal of the Unitarian Home Missionary College. The connection of these two congregations with the Association was, however, never more than nominal.

In *The Christian Reformer* of 1819 Richard Wright, the Unitarian Missionary, gave an account of a tour in Lancashire and Yorkshire which occupied from the 18th July to the 21st October 1818. In the course of the narrative he describes the discipline of the Methodist Unitarians. After speaking of the circuit and its Preachers' Plans, he adds: " Their societies are divided into classes, which have their meetings, not to relate experiences, but to instruct each other in the Scriptures and promote mutual edification."

John Ashworth frequently alludes to these classes held on weekdays as " private social meetings," by which he means meetings held in the houses of the Class Leaders. At these meetings, he said, " those who fear the Lord converse together, pray with one another, and sing hymns of praise to God." These class meetings, first organised under Joseph Cooke, form a conspicuous feature of the Methodist Unitarian Movement. In 1818 John Ashworth declared that " the indifference of some

of the members to these means of grace had caused him great sorrow and concern." He added, in characteristic fashion: "There are those present, and now in my eye, and others not here, whose absence on such occasions I have noticed and lamented. I wish what I have said may render it unnecessary for me even to mention the subject again." So far as the records go, his wish was gratified. As late as 1844 we find him speaking with approval of the continuance and success of these meetings at Newchurch, Rawtenstall and Padiham.

In all the Methodist Unitarian chapels the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was regularly observed, and both John Ashworth and James Taylor spoke at the Association Meetings of the obligation incumbent upon the members of the societies to attend upon it. Evening prayer meetings were held on Sundays at chapels where public worship was celebrated morning and afternoon; whilst early morning meetings for prayer on special occasions like anniversaries were continued in some, if not all, of the chapels until the middle of the nineteenth century.

The expenses involved in the supply of preachers to the societies were met, for many years, by the payment of a penny a week subscription on the part of the members, a practice clearly inspired by the Methodist habit of collecting that sum from the members of the class meetings.

At Todmorden, 3rd October 1824, at a meeting of the congregation, it was resolved "that the congregation be divided into classes, and that the members in each pew constitute a class, and that those pewholders who are willing to accept the office be requested to collect from those who sit with them such sums (weekly, monthly, or quarterly) as they may be disposed to give it; also keep account thereof, and hand the amount of such contributions to the Treasurer of the society at quarterly meetings to be held for the purpose." The society at Todmorden, though not so strong numerically

as the other societies, included many who were able to contribute larger sums than the penny a week which was the rule elsewhere. On 29th January 1826 the same society resolved " that a meeting be held in the school-room every Thursday evening at 8 o'clock for reading and conversation on religious subjects, at which all the members and any friends they may introduce shall be entitled to attend."

Pew rents in the Methodist Unitarian chapels were for long devoted to the reduction of debts on the building accounts.

If the organisation of the Methodist Unitarians was based on that of the connection from which its founder had been ejected, the spirit which animated them was the same as inspired John Wesley himself. Joseph Cooke stayed not within the bounds of his old circuit at Rochdale, extensive as it then was, but carried his gospel of a free, Scriptural Christianity to Padiham, Burnley, Todmorden and other districts. John Ashworth, who might be called the Superintendent of the Methodist Unitarian circuit, preached in Bacup, and was driven out of the village by the mob ; James Wilkinson tramped from his home in Rochdale to help the struggling cause at Oldham ; James Pollard and John Robinson, of Padiham, with the assistance of the Manchester Unitarian Missionary Societies, conducted numerous services at Downham, Newchurch-in-Pendle, Wheatley Lane, Higham, Rimmington and Chatburn. At the last-named place a room was taken in 1834 and a Sunday school established. Members of the societies at Rawtenstall and Newchurch sought to interest the villagers of Haslingden and Crawshawbooth in Unitarianism.

To estimate aright the self-sacrifice which such missionary efforts as these involved, it must be remembered not only that the preachers were engaged daily in arduous toil, often for a mere pittance, but also that there were no railways, and few roads worthy of the name. Even within the circuit itself the task of

supplying the stations was by no means inconsiderable. We may picture the preachers trudging over the hills from Rochdale to Todmorden, Newchurch and Padiham. Doubtless James Taylor or James Wilkinson, riding out from Rochdale, would meet John Ashworth or Jonathan Rudman at the head of Rooley Moor, and let him ride back, while one of them went forward on foot. Frequently the entire journey, a distance of eight miles, was performed on foot. The way lay over high hills and rough roads, and many must have been the times when the preacher with difficulty reached his destination at the hour appointed for morning service in consequence of the weather. Bathed in perspiration and dripping with wet, he would ascend the pulpit. In winter, tramping knee-deep through the snow, the preacher would find his lonely way across the moor as best he could. For more than twenty years John Ashworth preached fortnightly at Rochdale, exchanging alternately with James Taylor and James Wilkinson, who divided between them the duties of the ministry there; for a much longer period he preached once a month at Padiham, and for no less than forty years, at irregular intervals, the exchanges between the ministers of Rochdale and Newchurch were continued, the baptismal register at Newchurch showing Wilkinson officiating there for the first time on 17th August 1812, and for the last time on 5th October 1851. Richard Wright, who visited the district three times, in 1818, 1821, 1823, in his *Missionary Life and Labours* describes his experiences amongst the Methodist Unitarians. At Newchurch he preached several times during each of the three journeys, and had large, sometimes overflowing, congregations. At Haslingden he preached several times to crowded audiences, at Burnley once, and at Padiham to large congregations. "The people in this district," he said, "though plain and homely, and somewhat blunt in their manners, discover a good deal of manly and independent feelings, and appear to be

greatly improved since Sunday schools have been generally established amongst them. . . . No plans could be better suited to them than those of the Methodist Unitarians. . . . The judicious, unwearied, and gratuitous labours of their ministers are highly deserving of praise. . . . With the Methodist Unitarians I felt a union of soul, a fellowship of spirit, and was refreshed and edified. The openness of heart, simplicity of manners, frankness of behaviour, and fearless zeal in the cause of truth, which they manifested, were quite to my taste. Their exertions in keeping up large Sunday schools, and in supporting congregational libraries are highly commendable." [1]

Chapel libraries were established at each station. Grants of books and tracts were obtained from the Unitarian Tract Societies, and the members of the societies were encouraged to read Unitarian books and periodicals. In 1815 Benjamin Goodier noted that *The Christian Reformer* was read and admired by the Methodist Unitarians of Newchurch. Three years later, when Richard Wright visited Todmorden, he found to his surprise that *John Grundy's Lectures* had been for some time in the village library, that *The Monthly Repository* and *Christian Reformer* were both taken, and that the improved version of the Bible and various Unitarian books were in use.

A letter written by Thomas Thomas, of Todmorden, to John Fielden, dated 15th May 1822, shows that the members of the Todmorden society were interested in controversy: "The bearer of this [W. Greenwood, of Crosslee] is the person who has so frequently enquired for Yates' works. Ashton Stansfield of Ewood, and Barker of Crosslee have read both of Wardlaw's, and all parties are very desirous to see both of Yates'; in consequence of this, will you have the goodness to let him have both, and I'll vouch for their being kept in good condition."

[1] Pp. 320-323.

The books referred to are *Discourses on the Principal Points of the Socinian Controversy* (1814), by Ralph Wardlaw; the *Vindication of Unitarianism* (1815), by James Yates (a reply to Wardlaw); Wardlaw's *Unitarianism incapable of Vindication* (1816), and Yates' answer, *A Sequel* (1816).

Some resolutions passed by the society at Todmorden, 29th January 1826, further illustrate the practice of the members of that society: "That the books and tracts belonging to the society be collected and brought forward by those who have them in their possession, and that they be afterwards lent out after the afternoon service every Sunday to such persons as may apply for them." "That it is strongly recommended by this meeting, as a means of improving moral character, that the members of the society spend a portion of time daily reading the Scriptures, either to their families, or privately, according to circumstances, and practise those devotional and moral duties inculcated therein; and that they take especial care to be faithful to their promises and punctual in their performance, be strictly honest and invariably speak the truth, and, in every respect, be circumspect and consistent in their conduct and deportment. And that at our society meetings this resolution be frequently read and recommended."

The regular reading of the Scriptures not only determined the theological and political opinions of the Methodist Unitarians, but also shaped their language, nomenclature and amusements. They were a people of a book. Their chapels at Rochdale, Newchurch and Padiham were called respectively Providence, Bethlehem and Nazareth. Their Christian names, as the gravestones in their chapel yards attest, were taken from the Bible—Joshua, Elijah, Emmanuel, Eliezer, Manasseh, Rachel, Leah, Ruth, Esther, Susannah, Martha. Their most popular entertainment took the form of sacred drama, resembling in some respects the early Miracle Plays of York and Wakefield. Amongst Scriptural

episodes dramatised at the different chapels were those of Joseph and his Brethren, David and Goliath, Moses in the Bulrushes. Brooke Herford[1] thus describes one such play produced at a Padiham Christmas party, when no fewer than 500 were present: "The pews before the pulpit had been boarded over for the occasion, making a platform." . . . "There was Joseph in a patchwork counterpane, done up about him in the style well known to have been characteristic of Hebrew youth. There were his brethren who rated him for his presumption in endless blank verse. But how can I describe the thrilling effect when Joseph was let down by his remorseless relatives through an opening in the stage into the communion pew! And then the feast, when a deputation from the brethren—for the platform would not hold a table to accommodate more than four—sat down amid the imaginary gorgeousness of Pharaoh's palace to a sumptuous banquet of two plates of dry biscuits and a decanter of raspberry vinegar, while Joseph walked up and down in mental anguish, telling the audience how he was hardly able to restrain himself from making his kinship known." "The actors did their best, and the audience listened with open mouths and ears." "Perhaps I have seen better acting; and the *mise en scène* was far from perfect. It seemed a strange thing, too, acting plays in a chapel—but I thought of the old miracle plays, and was reconciled when I saw how the simple story told upon the audience."

The Methodist Unitarians were a scattered community, and the members of every society gathered on the Sabbath from far and near. The members of the Newchurch congregation, for example, were spread over an area of not less than eight miles. To engage in worship, and to enjoy the facilities for reading offered by the chapel libraries, men often travelled considerable distances. John Ashworth related in 1838 how "a poor man walked from Barnoldswick, three miles beyond

[1] *Eutychus and his Relations*, p. 54 *ff*.

Colne, to morning service at Burnley, then to Padiham to change his books, and back home—a distance of not less than twenty-four miles."

In one report after another of the meetings of the Methodist Unitarian societies appeals are made to the outside Unitarian public for grants of tracts and journals. The following is a typical note, appended to a report of the Sunday School Anniversary at Newchurch, 25th May 1845:—

"*N.B.*—If any subscriber to *The Inquirer* make no use of it after they have perused it, they would be doing a great service to the poorer friends amongst the hills by directing them to either of the following individuals:—Mr J. Ashworth, Mr J. Hargreaves, Rawtenstall, or Mr J. Wilkinson, Rochdale."

At this date a copy of *The Inquirer* cost sixpence, or a day's wage of many of the Methodist Unitarian brethren.

The type of preaching to which the Methodist Unitarians were accustomed was admirably described by Richard Wright as "plain, simple, affectionate, and impressive." What Dr John Thomson, of Halifax, said in 1815 of Ashworth, Taylor and Wilkinson, whom he had heard, was true of all the preachers: "They spoke without notes, and their services were Scriptural, plain, pious, and edifying." Of all the preachers, James Pollard and John Robinson, of Padiham, could boast least of anything like culture. Brooke Herford, who heard one of them in his old age, describes him as "a homely speaker, not very regular in his pronouns, and very lax in regard to his 'h's'"; but the piety of this saintly pair of preachers was proverbial in Padiham.

Of the services conducted at the various farmsteads named in the Plans no record survives. They must have closely resembled one held amidst similar surroundings by Robert Collyer, the blacksmith and Methodist Local Preacher, afterwards famous as the

Unitarian divine of Chicago and New York. Describing an experience on the Yorkshire moors in 1849, "at a farmhouse where they only had preaching now and then," he says: "It was in June. I can see the place still, and am aware of the fragrance of the wild uplands stealing through the open lattice in bars of sunshine to mingle with the pungent snap of the peat fire on the hearthstone, which gives forth the essence of the moorlands for a thousand years. . . . They were simple-hearted folk up there, of the old Methodist brand, eager and hungry for the bread of life, and very ready to come in with the grand Amen. The big farm kitchen was full of them, and they were just the hearers to help a poor fellow over the sand bar on the lift of their full hearts. So they sang with a will—and in all the world where will you hear such singing with a will as in old Yorkshire and Lancashire! Then I must pray with them. . . . Then the time for the sermon came after another hymn, when some stammering words came to my lips and then some more, while now and then the Amens came in for a chorus from the chests of men who had talked to each other in the teeth of the winds up there from the times of the Saxons and the Danes." [1]

Were the scene Nacks or Kitbooth on Rooley Moor, the date thirty years earlier, and the writer James Taylor or James Wilkinson, nothing would be more fitting. Doubtless the Methodist Unitarian preachers, like Collyer himself on the Yorkshire hills, addressed their homely audiences for the most part in the vernacular and were none the less esteemed on that account.

In *The Christian Reformer* of 1st May 1819 is a memorial sermon on the death of Richard Hoyle, preached at Newchurch by John Ashworth. Richard Hoyle, who died on 26th April 1818 of typhus fever, at the age of thirty-seven, was one of the young men who followed Joseph Cooke out of the Methodist Connexion twelve years earlier. The sermon is an interesting example of a

[1] Haynes Holmes. *Life and Letters of Robert Collyer*, i., pp. 88-89.

Methodist Unitarian discourse. It expounds Unitarianism as the religion which formed the excellent character of the deceased. "Whoever was absent from the preaching, the meeting, or the school . . . he would be there." Occasionally the homely Saxon of the preacher's language is apparent, and not less the familiar relations in which he stood towards the members of his flock. "All Christians (at least that I know aught about) believe that Jesus Christ was a man." . . . "The last time I spoke to him [Rd. Hoyle] was as I was coming up to the chapel, a fortnight since this afternoon. I called in the house, and was requested to go into the chamber and speak to him. . . . As soon as I entered the room he saw me, stretched out his hand, and said: 'Farewell, John.' . . . After prayer I took him by the hand and said: 'Now, Richard, I must go to my work of preaching, while I leave you to finish your work of dying.'" The sermon closed with an appeal: "Come forward, my friends, put your hands to the work, fill up his place."

The last meeting of the Methodist Unitarian Association of which a report survives was held at Rawtenstall on Good Friday, 1844, when delegates were present from the societies at Rochdale, Todmorden, Oldham, Newchurch, Padiham and Rawtenstall. The proceedings began with a prayer meeting at 7 A.M., followed by a service at 10.30 A.M., when a sermon was preached by the Rev. P. P. Carpenter, of Stand. After dinner at an inn, when it was observed that "by far the greater number present acted on the teetotal principle," a public meeting was held in the chapel, at which the representatives of the affiliated congregations spoke of their work and prospects. The reporter (the preacher for the day) adds: "These churches have no regularly educated ministers among them, but there must be an earnest feeling of brotherhood and a deep spirit of piety, which cannot but ensure their real prosperity. Prayer meetings are conducted regularly both on Sundays and in the week; the Sunday schools are well attended, and

the services are chiefly conducted by working men, with the assistance of Mr Ashworth, of Newchurch, and Mr Taylor, of Todmorden. They have to struggle with many difficulties, arising from poverty within and bigotry without, but feeling that they are in the path of duty they labour in faith."

In these words we may recognise, nearly forty years after the expulsion of Joseph Cooke from the Methodist Conference, not only the names of two of Cooke's co-adjutors, but also some of the characteristic features of Methodist Unitarianism—a lay ministry with regular exchanges of preachers, a profound love of prayer, a conspicuous zeal for Sunday school work, and congregations composed, in the main, of poverty-stricken working men.

CHAPTER VI

METHODIST UNITARIAN SUNDAY SCHOOLS

It is impossible to estimate at its full value the work of the schools maintained by the Methodist Unitarians except in the light of the state of education during the first half of the nineteenth century. Outside the Sunday schools the education of the working classes was then limited in extent and deficient in quality.

Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838), a young Quaker of Southwark, opened a school in his father's house, in 1801 transferred to a large room in Borough Road, and in 1803 published his first pamphlet, entitled *Improvements in Education*, in which he described his employment of elder scholars as monitors. Andrew Bell (1753-1832), a clergyman, as early as 1789 had employed monitors in the Orphan Asylum at Madras. The foundation of the Royal Lancasterian Society (1808), and of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church (1811), under the superintendency of Bell, gave rise to a bitter controversy, in which Nonconformists and Episcopalians were arrayed against each other.

The educational aims of Lancaster, though modest, were higher than those of his rival. Bell was unwilling to educate the poor too highly, and Lancaster, perforce, confined his teaching to reading, writing and arithmetic. Relatively to the needs and circumstances of the period, the work of both men was valuable. But the teachers were for the most part inefficient and ignorant, and only a comparatively small number of children were affected by the schools.

In the year 1816 the *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis*, of which Mr (afterwards Lord) Brougham was chairman, states that the Committee "have found reason to conclude that a very large number of poor children are wholly without the means of instruction."

In 1818 the Committee reported that "a very great deficiency exists in the means of educating the poor wherever the population is thin and scattered over country districts. The efforts of individuals combined in societies are almost wholly confined to populous places."

The interest of the State in education is shown by the fact that in 1832 £20,000 was voted for public education—the same sum as had been allotted for the purpose by the Commonwealth Parliament. On 4th May 1835 Lord Brougham brought the subject of National Education before the House of Lords, by moving a series of resolutions, among which was the following:—"That although the number of schools, where some of the elementary branches of education are taught, are greatly increased within the last twenty years, yet there exists a great deficiency of such schools . . . and that the means of elementary education are peculiarly deficient in the counties of Middlesex and Lancaster." Three years later the Committee on the education of the poorer classes reported that "the kind of education given to the children of the working classes is lamentably deficient, and that it extends (bad as it is) to but a small proportion of those who ought to receive it."

The so-called Dame Schools were in a deplorable condition. The Report of the Committee of the Manchester Statistical Society in 1834-1835 indicates that in Manchester "the greater part of them are kept by females, but some by old men, whose only qualification for this employment seems to be their unfitness for every other." "These schools are generally found in very dirty, un-

wholesome rooms, frequently in close, damp cellars or old, dilapidated garrets. In one of these schools eleven children were found in a small room in which one of the children of the mistress was lying in bed ill of the measles. In another school all the children, to the number of twenty-one, were squatting on the bare floor, there being no benches, chairs or furniture of any kind in the room." " In by far the greater number of these schools there were only two or three books among the whole number of scholars. In others there was not one, and the children depended for their instruction on a chance of some one of them bringing a book, or part of one, from home." " One of these schools is kept by a blind man, who hears his scholars read their lessons, and explains them with great simplicity; he is, however, liable to interruption in his academic labours, as his wife keeps a mangle, and he is obliged to turn it for her."

In 1839 the Treasury included £30,000 in the estimates for education, and in the same year, by an " Order in Council," dated 10th April, the Education Department, which ultimately became the Board of Education, was constituted.

As late as 18th April 1847 Macaulay could describe in the House of Commons the state of education in the country in scathing terms. A school was described as " a room crusted with filth, without light, without air, with a heap of fuel in one corner and a brood of chickens in another; the only machinery of instruction a dog-eared spelling-book and a broken slate; the masters the refuse of all other callings, discarded footmen, ruined pedlars, men who could not work a sum in the rule of three, men who could not write a common letter without blunders, men who did not know whether the earth was a sphere or a cube, men who did not know whether Jerusalem was in Asia or in America."

Sunday schools, in general, were superior to the average day school within the reach of the poor, alike in their place of meeting, their equipment, their methods of in-

struction and in the character of the teachers. The debt of the working classes of this country to the Sunday schools during the first half of the last century has not always received its full acknowledgment.

In the Methodist Connexion it is claimed that Sunday schools began as early as 1769. Four years earlier Theophilus Lindsey, whilst Vicar of Catterick, had established the first Sunday school in England, actually so called.[1] The name of Robert Raikes, of Gloucester, is indissolubly linked with the Sunday school movement. On 5th June 1784 he gave an account of how he was led to institute schools in the preceding year by the sight of the noisy crowds of neglected children in the streets on Sunday. He paid four persons to teach the children, and one or two clergymen listened to their recitation of the Catechism. John Wesley first refers to Sunday schools in his *Journal* under date 18th July 1784: "I preached in Bingley Church. Before service I slipped into the Sunday school, which contains 240 children, taught every Sunday by the curate. . . . I find these schools springing up wherever I go." On 3rd December 1784 a circular was issued by the Rev. William Turner, Unitarian minister of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, which led to the formation of a Sunday school in connection with his chapel at Hanover Square. The first public recommendation of Sunday schools is said to have been delivered by Thomas B. Bayley, Esq., of Hope, near Manchester, a member of Cross Street Chapel, in a charge to the Grand Jury at the Quarter Sessions in Manchester, 21st July 1785. In 1786 200,000 children were being taught in Sunday schools. All over the land they were scattering knowledge, purifying morals and teaching religion.

In this great work the Methodist Unitarians took their part. At all the stations there were flourishing schools. The Rochdale society, in addition to the school at Clover Street, for many years conducted schools at Lanehead

[1] Overton and Relton. *The English Church*, vii., p. 300.

and Meanwood. The number of scholars in attendance were 250-320 at Newchurch, 150-200 at Padiham, 200-250 at Rochdale, 100-150 at Lanehead, 50-90 at Rawtenstall, 30-60 at Oldham, 100-120 at Todmorden. In 1825 returns from six schools showed a total of 1021 children.

At most of the stations the schools were held in the body of the chapel. The equipment of the schools was rude and inexpensive. John Ashworth's Account Book shows that at Newchurch in 1809 the writing-tables used were made by the members of the society. At Padiham battledores were used for writing-tables. At Rawtenstall Travers Madge reported: "They have fixed up boards in the front of the pews in the galleries, which, being hung on hinges, can be lifted up as desks to write upon, and when the writing is over, can be let down again."

The subjects taught in all the schools were reading, writing and arithmetic, with here and there Scripture, history and geography, or even mathematics. The Bible, and especially the New Testament, was regularly read. At Newchurch, and presumably elsewhere, the catechism by Joseph Cooke entitled *A Sunday Evening's Companion* was used as a text-book for a considerable period. In 1826 John Ashworth purchased two dozen copies at a cost of £1, 10s., to supplement the stock in hand. For four years, 1832-1835 inclusive, one item recurs in the Newchurch Account Book: "Paid Richard Ashworth teaching counting for 20 weeks 15s."

A curriculum as extensive as this was exceedingly rare in Sunday schools connected with orthodox chapels of any persuasion. Many eminent Wesleyan divines like Dr Jabez Bunting strongly opposed all secular instruction. "Conference finally pronounced against the practice of teaching writing as a breach of the Fourth Commandment."[1] It was held that while it was clearly a religious duty to teach children to read, that they might have access to the word of God, it was just as clearly a secular

[1] Moore. *History of Wesleyan Methodism in Burnley and East Lancashire*, p. 116.

duty to teach them to write. Episcopalian and Nonconformist schools, with few exceptions, were content with teaching Bible reading and the elements of Christian doctrine.

The practice of the Methodist Unitarians did not escape censure. On 31st January 1857 the headmaster of the Todmorden day school, Mr Harrison, who happened to be the superintendent of the Unitarian Sunday school, observed that "the teaching of arithmetic and kindred subjects in the Sunday school was much spoken against by the orthodox Christians. A clergyman in the district, at a public meeting, had expressed his sorrow that there was one Sunday school in the neighbourhood where secular subjects were taught. This clearly referred to the Unitarian school—the only school in the town where such things are taught on Sunday. But so long as ignorance prevailed, the subjects in question must be taught to children in Sunday schools, till the time came when they could get the instruction readily and better elsewhere."

The Methodist Unitarian Sunday schools attracted many who were above the age of children, so great was the zeal for knowledge amongst their members. In 1828 at Padiham many married men had become scholars and were learning to read and write, whilst the number of scholars ready to enter the school was beyond its capacity to hold them. The poverty of scholars and teachers at this station is illustrated by a remark of the Rev. Henry Clarke in 1830 that he noticed "three or four scholars had but one Bible or Testament between them, and some had no more than a tattered leaf." But Padiham was the poorest of the societies in respect of worldly wealth, though in zeal excelled by none. In 1843 the scholars in this school arranged to meet also on the Monday night to carry further the work of the Sunday. The progress of the young men in various branches of learning was reported by John Ashworth in 1841: "One would deliver a

lecture on music, another on astronomy, and another on geography. These on weekday nights." At Oldham they could boast in 1849 that " the instruction is superior to that of any Sunday school in the town, and in addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic, embraced lessons in geography, grammar, and the elements of natural philosophy."

At Todmorden the school, like the chapel, is closely associated with the name of John Fielden. His name stands first in the list of subscribers to the Todmorden Sunday school, an unsectarian institution founded on 18th March 1816, at a meeting held in the vestry of the Methodist chapel. The extant records show that in this school nearly £15 was spent in furniture ; and the preliminary outlay on " letters and alphabets, spelling-books, Catechisms, Testaments, Bibles, paper, pointers, printed rules, quills, and candles" brought the total cost to more than £50. The articles enumerated in this list show what was deemed requisite in a well-furnished school a hundred years ago.

In 1825, as announced at the Annual Meeting of the Methodist Unitarian Association, the Todmorden Society, on 26th May, established, " a free school for 100 children of all denominations from the age of four years to the time of going to the factory." The school was to be opened " after the midsummer vacation." It was taught by a mistress, whose salary was paid by John Fielden. Mrs M'Keand, a member of the Todmorden society in 1824, and named in Baines' Directory as conductor of an academy, may have been the mistress in question. In 1826 two Quaker ladies, the Misses Mary and Jane King, taught in the school. According to the Factory Act of 1833-1834, " except in mills for the manufacture of silk, no child who shall not have completed his or her ninth year of age " could be employed in the factory, so that the children at this school, after the date named, must have been between the ages of four and nine. It was one of the earliest free,

undenominational day schools in the country, and its foundation was due to the liberal and public spirit of John Fielden.

The Todmorden Unitarian Sunday school was opened in 1824, when the chapel was built, and in the following year numbered 120 scholars. The Rules adopted by the teachers of the school, 9th May 1830, though quaintly expressed, afford an insight into the government, and incidentally into the curriculum, of one of the Methodist Unitarian Sunday schools:

1. The teachers' attendance is indispensable at the opening of the school, that the scholars' punctuality of arriving in proper time may be best secured, and their seats occupied without confusion.
2. During a portion of Scripture being read, or an address delivered, they must endeavour to promote the correct behaviour of their respective classes. And afterwards observe strictly the orders of the superintendents, respecting the distribution and the collecting of books, slates, etc.
3. Reading and writing to be commenced by signal, and the teachers of reading must take care that their scholars speak audibly and distinctly, and not suffer them to say their words twice over or to spell a word in part, and pronounce it, until they have spelled out each syllable, separately and conjointly. And the teacher, in order more effectually to excite the attention of the scholars, will frequently direct them to read across each other.
4. When hearing of spelling, the teacher will pronounce the words clearly and forcibly, so as to be heard and understood by the whole class; and will enjoin the same mode of correct enunciation on each scholar, so that they may all hear and be improved.
5. The teachers of writing, grammar, arithmetic,

history, mathematics, etc., are expected never to loose [*sic*] sight of accuracy and utility.

6. As it is desirable that a uniform and correct pronunciation should be taught, which would be very convenient and pleasing, it is agreed that *Walker's Critical and Pronouncing Dictionary* be the standard, and that a copy of which together with one of his *Key to the Classical Pronunciation of Greek, Latin and Scripture Proper Names* shall be purchased and placed in the school for reference.
7. Any teacher wishing to discontinue his or her attendance is expected to give a month's previous notice.

A Teachers' Plan (March-December) printed in 1834 shows that there were ten classes, or "desks," as these were termed, and that each class had four teachers, who in turn, Sunday by Sunday, were responsible for the instruction given. It may have been due to the influence of John Fielden, for many years a superintendent of the school, that its rules were somewhat rigid. Unpunctuality was punished by exclusion. The Minute in the record runs: "Service to be held at half-past nine in the morning, the school to commence immediately after, and none admitted as scholars that don't attend the service."

The serious manner in which the Methodist Unitarians of Todmorden regarded the work of their school is evident from a resolution adopted by the society, 19th January 1826: "That the members of this society feel it a duty to co-operate together, according to their time, measure and ability, in improving the morals and wellbeing of the poor of the rising generation by affording encouragement and assistance to Sunday and other schools." Two years later there was formed in connection with the school the "Todmorden Friendly Society," at which were taught "knitting, sewing, reading, writing and arithmetic, and any other useful art at the discretion of the teacher."

The factory school established by Fielden Brothers at Waterside in 1827 was one of the earliest of such schools. Mr Thomas Stewart, the first schoolmaster, was appointed in the same year minister of the Unitarian chapel, and the dual office was filled by his successors until the last decade of the century. From a letter written by a former scholar it is clear that there were several children in the school in 1838 who were not engaged in the factory. When James Cook was in charge of the school (1835-1837) the scholars numbered 106, and a fee of ½d. per day was charged for their instruction. A note written by James Taylor in 1848 shows that the master, who supplied the necessary copy-books, was frequently unable to secure payment for the same.

The great event in the year for all the Sunday schools was the "Charity" or Sunday School Anniversary. Upon this occasion there was special music, rehearsed for many weeks before, and an ample supply of beer for those who rehearsed it. Young men and maidens appeared in all their finery, however little that might be, and the children, dressed in white, commonly occupied the place of honour facing the congregation. The announcement of the collections at the close of the day's services marked the climax of the general rejoicing, for there existed no little rivalry between neighbouring congregations of all sects and opinions with respect to offertories in support of Sunday schools.

In John Ashworth's Account Book the names of the preachers at Newchurch and the amounts of the offertories are preserved. The entries are curiously phrased. For example: "1818 June 21 Collections made by Mr Elliott £13, 14s. 1d." refers to the collections taken up when the Rev. Gilbert W. Elliott of Blackwater Street Chapel, Rochdale, was the preacher, and "1819 Aug. 1. To Collections by Allard from Bury" indicates that the preacher was the Rev. William Allard, of Bury. The most successful Anniversary during the long ministry

of John Ashworth was that of 1822. The Hymn Paper used on that occasion contains the following preface:—

"Hymns to be sung at the Unitarian Chapel, Newchurch, Rossendale, on Sunday Aug. 4th 1822, when a Sermon will be preached by the Rev. George Harris, of Bolton, and a Collection made for the benefit of the Sunday School. Service to commence at Six o'clock in the Evening. During the last year there has been an increase of about 70 scholars which has augmented the Expenses, and caused the Funds to be in arrears. The Committee indulge a hope that the increasing prosperity of the old School will be sufficient to recommend it to Notice of its Friends; and as its Support principally depends upon the liberality of those who attend the Service, Silver will be expected on admission into the Gallery."

The appeal was not in vain, for the "record" collection of £40, 1s. rewarded the efforts of the Committee. The Paper contains eight hymns, four for the evening and four for afternoon service. Apparently Mr Harris did not preach in the afternoon, though collections for the school were made at both services.

The hymns, though of little merit as poetical compositions, exhibit the simplicity of mind characteristic of the Methodist Unitarians, and shed some light upon the lot of the children of the poor at this period. A few verses from the first and last hymns sung at the evening service are typical of all:

HYMN 1

Sweet Charity, divinely fair,
  Her brightest works displays;
When youth are led with timely care
  In Wisdom's sacred ways.

The youthful crowds of labouring poor
  To early toil confin'd,
Here find in learning's ample store
  Improvement for the mind.

Their kind instructors freely toil
And give them willing aid ;
But, blest with heaven's approving smile
Their pains are well repaid.

Hymn 4 (*After the Collection*)

Ye gen'rous friends accept our thanks
For what you now have freely given.
The Lord reward you with His grace
And bring you safe at last to heaven.

Then seeing we were poor indeed
And wanted books to write and read,
Our benefactors good and kind
Lent us their aid with lib'ral mind.

Lord bless these friends, who good have been
To help us in the time of need ;
Come, Lord, our benefactors bless
And give our Sunday schools success.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IDEALS OF THE METHODIST UNITARIANS

The half-century (1806-1856) during which the Methodist Unitarians flourished was a period of social and political unrest, when problems of poverty and schemes of political and economic reform were agitating the minds of the masses. The mechanical inventions of the last half of the eighteenth century were slowly achieving an industrial revolution, and in the county of Lancaster the cotton industry began to supersede the manufacture of woollen as the primary occupation of the people. The substitution of steam for water as the motive power led further to the supplanting of the domestic system of industry by the factory system. The consequent poverty of hand-loom weavers when placed in competition with the power-loom, and the drafting of young children into the factories, created urgent problems that clamoured for solution.

The Methodist Unitarians were in the main weavers, colliers and artisans. Their ministers belonged to the same class; one was a woollen weaver, two were hand-loom cotton weavers, one a fuller and cloth-dresser, one a shoemaker, and one a small farmer. Unlike the ordinary Dissenting preachers, with the single exception of Cooke, they had not been set apart for the work of the ministry by a special training, or the appointment of a conference or other ecclesiastical assembly, nor did they, after a few years' settlement, migrate to another part of the country. Five of them had been Methodist local

preachers. They served until the end of their ministry in the circuit in which they began it, and, without an exception, did not abandon their trade or calling whilst engaged in preaching. From the nature of the case, then, there could not exist amongst them anything like a professional or clerical spirit. No difference of class, calling, or culture separated pulpit from pew. Ashworth and his colleagues had been members of the various Methodist societies whence sprang the congregations to which they afterwards ministered, and amongst their hearers at the outset were their lifelong friends and nearest relatives. Never were the interests of minister and congregation so closely identified as in the case of the Methodist Unitarians. They were all, as we have seen, awake to the advantages which education confers, and by the application of reason in their study of Scripture had become heterodox in theological opinion. Their helpers on the Plan—the Prayer Leaders—were men of a similar type, tradition and training.

At this date amongst the workers of Lancashire and elsewhere there was a widespread antipathy to members of the clerical profession. "More pigs and less parsons" was a common Chartist cry, and a Chartist orator in Burnley was "loudly applauded when he united churches and mills in the same category and expressed an ardent hope that both should be involved in the one common conflagration." [1] Partly this feeling was due to the fact that clergymen in general belonged to the privileged classes, but it was doubtless deepened by a sense of the futility of most pulpit discourses in relation to the problems of life and death which so sorely beset the working classes. Mr W. Cooke Taylor remarked in 1842 [2] that the people of Rossendale "belong to a great variety of sects, a small proportion only being members of the Church, the sobriety of our ordinances being

[1] Cooke Taylor. *A Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire*, p. 101.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

probably too tame for the fiery energy and enthusiasm which forms so conspicuous an element in their character." "To the same cause" he was disposed "to attribute the disproportionate amount of congregational singing in their public worship, and the tendency to rant and extravagance which is very observable in their extempore prayer." But besides the causes alleged for the particular character of public worship in Rossendale, and especially amongst the Methodist Unitarians, there was the fact that the "open" service could be made more expressive of a modern, democratic spirit than the ancient, staid liturgy of the Established church, and above all, that the pulpit utterances were those of men acquainted with the physical as well as the spiritual needs of the people. Mr Taylor himself illustrates what was too common in the church: "At church in the evening I was somewhat surprised to find a young clergyman, addressing an operative congregation, deliver a very learned and academic thesis on the system of doctrine set forth in the Oxford Tracts." "To all the congregation, with perhaps the single exception of myself, it was not one whit more edifying than if it had been delivered in Hebrew." Again, John Wesley, by precept and example, fostered in his disciples a spirit of loyalty to throne and State. His colleagues and successors pursued the same policy, and as far as might be, sought to curb the revolutionary ardour of the rank and file in the spheres alike of politics and religion. "The Wesleyan Methodist Church," says the historian,[1] "had by the beginning of the Chartist period suffered the blight of respectability, and had lost the confidence of the intelligent working man, because of the conservatism of its political policy, the Tory affiliations of its leading ministers, and the undemocratic form of its government." Such restraining influences being in their case removed, the followers of Joseph Cooke became as radical in politics as in theology. The natural

[1] Faulkner. *Chartism and the Churches*, p. 12.

bent of their minds added to the bitter poverty of their circumstances led them to take a keen interest in the constitutional and economic agitations of the time. To their societies were attracted many of the most advanced thinkers in the district. One at least who had taken part in the so-called battle of Peterloo (August, 1819) broke with the faith of his fathers, and threw in his lot with the Methodist Unitarians of Newchurch. The natural affinities of Chartists have been recognised by the author of *Chartism and the Churches*[1]: "With the adoption of more radical political views came the transition on the part of many Chartists to more radical religious views. The Rev. Henry Solly and the Rev. Joseph Barker, both leading Chartists, left the Presbyterian church and the Methodist New Connexion respectively for Unitarianism. As with the ministers so with the working men. The wide range of thought allowed to Unitarians and the cultural emphasis in their teaching were very appealing to the Chartists." The reference to Henry Solly is an error. He did not pass from orthodoxy to Unitarianism. His father was a friend of Joseph Priestley; he himself was educated by Unitarians, and always ministered amongst them. Mr Faulkner concludes that "the sources are too meagre to allow of any definite statement as to the extent of Chartism amongst Unitarians." Apparently he is unaware of the existence of the Methodist Unitarians, whose founder, moreover, exercised a considerable power, by his writings, over the mind of Joseph Barker, according to the confession of the latter.

As might be expected, "bread and butter" questions most engrossed the thoughts of the Methodist Unitarians, but these were, or appeared to be, bound up with larger movements of constitutional reform.

The curse of the factory system, which lay so heavily on the members of the societies, was vividly set forth in a pamphlet by one of their number (John Fielden) in

[1] Faulkner. *Chartism and the Churches*, pp. 105-106.

1836: "Factories were built on the side of streams capable of turning the water wheel. Thousands of hands were suddenly required in these places remote from towns. The small and nimble fingers of little children, being by far the most in request, the custom instantly sprang up of procuring apprentices from the different parish workhouses of London, Birmingham and elsewhere. Many, many thousands of these helpless creatures were sent down into the North, being from the age of seven to the age of thirteen or fourteen years old."

Amongst such children were the father and mother of the late Robert Collyer, Litt.D., one-time Yorkshire blacksmith and afterwards the famous American Unitarian preacher, the father, Robert Collyer, being taken from a London workhouse, and the mother, Harriett Norman, from the Norwich institution, at the ages respectively of ten and nine, to work in the factory of Messrs Colbeck & Wilks at Blubberhouses in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

As the modern historian observes,[1] "over these parish apprentices the mill masters exercised almost the authority of slave owners. It was no exaggeration to call them 'white slaves,' for they were treated merely as sources of profit. They were sometimes whipped and starved to render them tractable, and cases have been placed on record of their being chained if they attempted to escape. Some of them worked constantly in the night-shifts for four or five years, that is from seven in the evening until six in the morning without mealtimes."

John Fielden (1784-1849), the Methodist Unitarian of Todmorden, threw himself with great ardour into the crusade for factory reform. The third son of Joshua Fielden, of Laneside, a Tory and a Quaker, as a boy of ten he worked in his father's mill. As early as 1816 he opposed the cruel treatment of women and children

[1] Chapman. *Lancashire Cotton Industry*, p. 87.

in factories, and the firm established by his father was conspicuous for humane and considerate treatment of its operatives. He became a leader in the agitation for political reform as a means of effecting protection for the workers, and was a prominent member of the various organisations which came into existence for the purpose of propaganda.

At Oldham in 1816, the year when their chapel was opened, the Methodist Unitarians were to the fore in such organisations. On the 23rd September of that year was founded the "Oldham Union Society," which, it was stated, "will co-operate with the London Society, known by the name 'The Hampden Club,' to promote by constitutional means a reform in the Commons House of Parliament." Of this meeting William Browe—a leader and Trustee of Lord Street Chapel—was chairman. His name, misspelt Browne, appears in the list of preachers on the Methodist Unitarian Plan (January-March, 1817). Upon the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in June 1817, Browe, with George Wilson, another leading member and Trustee of the Methodist Unitarian Chapel, fled to America in order to escape arrest. A letter written on 7th March 1828 by John Gee, an active Trustee, names Joseph Newton as a third Trustee of the chapel, who had emigrated to the United States, presumably in consequence of his political opinions.

On 13th January 1831 John Fielden took the chair "at a very numerous meeting of the inhabitants of Todmorden and its vicinity, held at the White Hart Inn, Todmorden," when the Todmorden Political Union was founded, "for obtaining an effectual reform in the House of Commons, and the redress of local and national grievances." Amongst those who took a prominent part in the proceedings were many Methodist Unitarians, including George White, their minister. The latter was one of a committee of two who drew up an address to King William IV., praying for clemency "on behalf

of those of our deluded and unfortunate fellow-subjects, who remain convicted under Special Commission of illegal and riotous proceedings and acts of incendiaries." At the next meeting of the Union, on Shrove Tuesday, 15th February 1831, the chair was taken by Mr George Ashworth, a member of the Methodist Unitarian Society, and the objects of the Union were set forth—

1st. To endeavour, by lawful means and those only, to obtain a Radical reform in the constitution of the Commons House of Parliament.

2nd. To prepare petitions and addresses (and remonstrances if necessary) to the King and to the two Houses of Parliament, respecting the preservation and restoration of national rights; to procure the abolition of all injurious monopolies, the repeal of all taxes which affect the Press and prevent the dissemination of knowledge, the repeal of bad laws and the enactment of good laws.

3rd. To endeavour to obtain the abolition of every species of slavery throughout his Majesty's Dominions.

4th. To promote peace, union and concord among the members of this Association, and to guide and direct their efforts into uniform, peaceful and lawful operations, so that they may not waste their strength in loose and unconnected exertions for the attainment of partial and impolitic measures.

5th. To take cognisance of all real local abuses, and to prevent as far as practicable all public wrongs and oppressions.

A Political Council of twenty was appointed, of whom at least seven were prominent Methodist Unitarians. A few days after the introduction of the first Reform Bill into the House of Commons (1st March 1831) the Council sent an address of thanks to his Majesty's ministers, which was duly acknowledged by Earl Grey. On 20th James Suthers, a Methodist Unitarian, became secretary

of the Council, and in the following year the sum of £1, 10s. was voted to him as salary. On 22nd August Messrs George White and John Fielden were requested to draw up a petition in behalf of the Union " against the present taxes on knowledge."

The " taxes on knowledge," a phrase coined by Leigh Hunt, referred to the stamp duties on newspapers and other publications, imposed in 1712 and not repealed until 1855.

On 25th September 1831 the Union held a public meeting in Todmorden, when " the Constable," Mr Thomas Thomas, a Methodist Unitarian, was in the chair, and it was resolved to send a petition to the House of Lords urging them to pass the Reform Bill.

Upon the rejection of the Bill by the Peers the Council on 10th October published an address to their townsmen and neighbours, which had been drawn up by the Rev. George White. A couple of paragraphs serve to illustrate the style of the Unitarian minister and the peaceful propaganda of the politicians with whom he was associated:

" Let not the people despair. Reform is only retarded, the King and his Ministers are firm, and determined to carry the Measure by constitutional means attached to the Royal Prerogative; this calls for our unflinching determination to obey the law, rally round the Throne, and support his Majesty's Ministers." " For the Faction builds all its hopes of regaining influence, enslaving and oppressing the people, squandering the national resources, fattening on the public purse, and preying upon the vitals of the nation, upon the expectation that the people will be irritated and urged on to deeds of riot and outrage."

In addition to this address one memorial was submitted to the King " humbly imploring him to dissolve Parliament, and to exercise his Royal Prerogative by creating such a number of liberal and patriotic Peers as would enable his Ministers to carry the Reform Bill,"

and another to his ministers "earnestly beseeching them to retain office and to advise their Royal Master to make an addition to the Peerage."

When the Council met, 16th April 1832, Mr George Ashworth was in the chair. By this time the Reform Bill had again passed through the Commons and a second reading in the Lords. The Council therefore addressed his Majesty's ministers, expressing the "solemn and firm conviction that if any higher qualification for voting or any diminution of the disfranchisement be adopted than what are contained in the Bill, it would inevitably produce great dissatisfaction in the manufacturing districts, and consequences might follow which it is awful to contemplate. That our opinion may be properly appreciated, permit us to say that our Union consists of merchants, manufacturers, tradesmen, mechanics, artisans, etc., residing in our neighbourhood, so that our information on their opinions and sufferings may be relied on." "We form part of an extensive manufacturing district, the people of which have been long suffering from the pressure of the times, and thousands of families among the operatives are absolutely in a state of starvation, who, though in full employment, cannot earn 3d. a head per day to subsist on ; and that they have borne this in the most patient manner, and have evinced a moral principle beyond all praise."

The address was signed by Mr George Ashworth as chairman of the Council.

"On Thursday evening, 10th May, news having arrived at Todmorden that Earl Grey and his colleagues had tendered their resignations to his Majesty in consequence of his Majesty not having acceded to their application to create Peers, to enable them to carry the Reform Measure, a few of the members of the Council originated a requisition to Mr Thomas Thomas, the Constable, who called a public meeting of the inhabitants of Todmorden and its neighbourhood on Saturday, the 12th, at which there were nearly 5000 persons."

Resolutions were passed expressing abhorrence of "the conduct of those who have apparently effected the loss of the Reform Bill," "beseeching his Majesty to call to his counsels men who will pass it," and agreeing upon a petition to the House of Commons and an address to the King, founded upon the resolution passed.

When the third Reform Bill finally became law, 7th June, it was decided by the Union to hold a dinner on the 4th August to celebrate the event. John Fielden was invited to preside, and 350 sat down to dinner, served in the open air. A grand procession followed, composed of Friendly and Trade societies, each with its band and banner, the Union having a flag designed bearing the words: "The Members of the Todmorden Political Union. Union has conquered and will conquer."

It is plain that the Reform Movement at Todmorden was largely directed and inspired by the members of the Methodist Unitarian chapel there. It was the same at Rochdale, and, as already shown, to some extent, also at Oldham.

At the election of 1832 two of the most prominent of the Methodist Unitarians were candidates for Parliament—namely, John Fielden, at Oldham, and James Taylor, at Rochdale. In his election address John Fielden declared himself "a reformer on the broad principle," and "maintained that it is the right of every man paying taxes to have a voice in the choosing of those persons who make the laws under which he has to live . . . that Parliaments should be annual and votes be protected by the ballot." He attributed "the distress of the labourers to excessive taxation, the bitter fruits of iniquitous and ruinous wars," and pledged himself "to vote for the abolition of tithes, of all sinecures and pensions not merited by well-known public service, the repeal of the assessed taxes, the tax on malt, hops and soaps, and the total abolition of the Corn Laws." "I am opposed," he said, "to all injurious monopolies, a friend

to civil and religious liberty, and adverse to slavery in every shape."

In the last two clauses are reflected the religious opinions of a Unitarian who was the son of a Quaker. On this programme John Fielden was elected M.P. for Oldham, with William Cobbett as his colleague. It is interesting to note that in his *Rural Rides*, reprinted from *The Weekly Register* two years earlier, Cobbett had bitterly attacked Unitarians and Quakers.

At Rochdale James Taylor, the Methodist Unitarian minister, came forward as the Radical candidate at the request of seventy-seven of his townsmen. The other candidates in the field were John Fenton, Liberal, and John Entwistle, Tory.

In his address to the electors Taylor referred to his family as well-known Radical reformers, and pledged himself to support—" 1st. The total repeal of the Corn Laws. 2nd. The repeal of the taxes on agriculture. 3rd. The repeal of most of the taxes which oppress the middle and labouring classes of society. 4th. To meet this reduction in taxation, an equitable adjustment of the national debt. 5th. A total abolition of all sinecures and unmerited pensions. 6th. A reduction of the army and navy to the strength which is absolutely necessary to support our colonies and foreign relations. 7th. Such a reform in the Church of England as will allow all its members the just privilege of choosing and supporting their own ministers. 8th. Such a reform in the law as will cause every man to have impartial justice done him in his own town free of expense. 9th. The total abolition of all monopolies. 10th. An effectual reform of the local abuses of the town. 11th. Repeal of the law of primogeniture. 12th. Total abolition of the slave trade. 13th. And, to preserve the purity of representation, annual Parliaments, universal or household suffrage, and vote by ballot."

The last clause includes three of the famous " six points " of the People's Charter, drawn up by William

Plate VII

JOHN FIELDEN

To face page 122

Lovett and published on 8th May 1838. In politics as in theology the Methodist Unitarian preacher was before his time.

In his support two popular democrats spoke in Rochdale—Henry Hunt, M.P. for Preston, who, for his connection with the meeting in St Peter's Fields, 16th August 1819, known as the "Peterloo Massacre," had served two years in gaol, addressed a crowd in the open air on 28th August 1832; and William Cobbett, whose writings and speeches exercised an enormous influence all over the country, spoke in Clover Street Chapel. A conspicuous feature of the election was the midnight procession after Hunt's meeting.

On Nomination Day, 11th December, there were the usual scenes at the hustings. James Taylor, who offered in his speech to retire from the contest if either of his opponents would advocate the abolition of the Corn Laws, universal suffrage and vote by ballot, received a great majority. At the close of the first day's poll, however, he resigned, having received only 107 votes against 220 for Entwistle and 238 for Fenton. Taylor's committee then addressed a manifesto to their "fellow-sufferers," in which they declared that "upwards of 100 of the large majority of traitors had solemnly pledged themselves to vote for Mr Taylor, but under the influence of property have betrayed and sold their townsman into the hands of their enemies."

At the next election, January, 1835, Taylor supported John Fenton, the Liberal candidate, who on this occasion was defeated by John Entwistle, and in 1837 he took the chair at a meeting held in Robert Kelsall's new mill to consider the claims of the candidates. At this election Fenton was supported by John Bright, who issued a spirited address. In the same year James Taylor became minister of the Todmorden Methodist Unitarian Society, where he doubtless found congenial political, as well as religious, fellowship. In November, 1838, after a torchlight procession, James Taylor ad-

dressed a mass meeting of Chartists, when the speakers included the famous Feargus O'Connor. In 1839, in conjunction with Thomas Livsey and others, he established a Radical Association in Rochdale and became its first president. The members of the Association endorsed the Chartist programme. Following the fashion set by Henry Hunt, Taylor and the directors of the Association commonly wore white hats, which were manufactured by Taylor himself, who, for a considerable time, carried on his trade as a hat manufacturer in Spotland Bridge, Rochdale.

The agitation which followed the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832 was an evidence that that measure did not satisfy the high hopes formed of it by multitudes of working men. Food remained dear and labour cheap. The economic and political grievances of the "lower" classes were not removed. Hence arose two separate movements, one socialistic and frankly irreligious, associated with the name of Robert Owen, and the other Radical but not irreligious, aiming at the enfranchisement of the masses as a step towards a drastic reform of their conditions of life. With the first of these the Methodist Unitarians showed little sympathy; of the second, many of them were staunch supporters.

The religious views of the Chartists, broadly speaking, and leaving out of account atheists like Hetherington, were largely identical with those of the Methodist Unitarians. Like the latter, they set little value on credal statements and dogmatic belief. "When the Chartists essayed themselves to put their hands to the task of organising and running a Church, they eliminated creeds as such, although retaining baptism and the Lord's Supper, and put the entire emphasis upon good works." [1] Dierlamm [2] has illustrated the Chartist insistence upon toleration in religion, freedom from dogmatic tests, the disestablishment of the Church and the need for the education of children. Whilst these articles of faith

[1] Faulkner. *Chartism and the Churches,* p. 20.

[2] *Die Flugschriftenliteratur der Chartistenbewegung,* s. 59-60.

were not monopolised by Unitarians, nowhere outside the Chartist Movement were they so strongly advocated as by the Methodist Unitarians. Hence it came about that where there was no Chartist church, as in Rossendale, Rochdale, Todmorden and Padiham, many Chartists were associated, more or less closely, with the Methodist Unitarian societies. The views adopted by the followers of Cooke found practical expression in the work of men like Fielden, White, Taylor and Mills.

In 1839 the Rev. J. R. Beard, the friend and helper of the Methodist Unitarians, published nine lectures on *The Religion of Jesus Christ defended from the Assaults of Owenism.* He closes his preface with the observation: "There is a large and a most valuable class of persons —the teachers in our Sunday schools—who, by their position and connections, are much exposed to the assaults of the partisans of Socialist infidelity, and whom it is of importance to furnish with some means of self-defence." In the first lecture he defines his position towards Owenism in these words: "I entertain no hostility to any rational attempt which the people make with a view to better their condition. On the contrary, I wish them every success; and though I have my doubts whether the economical arrangements proposed for adoption in *The New Moral World* would prove much better than delusions, yet so firmly am I convinced that their salvation must, in the main, be wrought out by themselves, and moreover, so well do I augur of at least the indirect results of any honest and earnest effort after social improvement, that I, for one, not only have no quarrel with the disciples of *The New Moral World* in their attempts to better their conditions and the condition of the many, but can do no other than look with interest and hope on their undertaking. But when I find that, in pursuit of their proposed social reform, they strike at what I consider the most sacred principles of religious and moral truth, I feel an impulse which I cannot resist to assume a defensive position."

Dr Beard's attitude towards Owenism was that of John Ashworth and the leaders of the Methodist Unitarian Movement.

Speaking of the state of the society at Padiham in 1840, John Ashworth thus refers to Owenism, its influence and ideals:

"At Padiham Unitarianism has pretty firmly fixed her foot, but she has her enemies to contend with. Poverty, a mighty giant and cruel despot, has nearly encircled her, and cut off a considerable portion of her supplies. This has made a deep impression on her garrison. There are, however, some old veterans within her walls that have held long and dreadful conflicts with this ugly and powerful monster, and who, I am sure, will not be dislodged from their fastnesses. They may perish by famine, but even then they neither submit to the enemy, nor are conquered. Some raw troops, who had put on the uniform of the company, have been very much dismayed by this powerful antagonist; and while labouring under their trepidation, pushed with want and anxiously looking out for supplies, they met with a recruiting officer of the name of Owen. I believe he made them offers; and never were offers better suited to heal wounds which merciless poverty had inflicted upon young troops. The offers are that by enlisting under his banners he will completely protect and defend them from the attacks of this stomach-pinching monster; they shall never again be reached by any of his powerful darts, nor even see him any more; they shall be settled and united, with an affectionate brotherhood, in a country fertile as Eden, yielding all kinds of fruit in large profusion, requiring comparatively little labour; they shall be well fed, well clothed, well lodged, and they are to be happy in mind as well as fed in body; nor temptation nor trial is to assail them, for, says this officer, where want is not, temptation and trial cannot come. I suppose, too, there will never sit a scowl upon the brow of a wife, nor austerity upon that of a husband. This is just the thing, and these

young troops are already apparently happy in the prospect of all this ease and enjoyment, and very eager that others should join their ranks; and they become troublesome in proportion as their Utopian scheme is refused. These two enemies have certainly done some injury to our cause at Padiham. Yet I do not wonder that they should catch at a straw. Sevenpence for a cut of calico; weave one and a half on a day, that is forty-two yards, equal to nine cuts a week, and five shillings and threepence is the wages; but this is more than one will regularly do. John Robinson and James Pollard, our two good, worthy, new, old preachers, with hard working, can scarcely reach a cut a day."

Two years later, in one of his reports, Ashworth returns to the same subject. "Poverty, with a giant's strength, is tumbling the various grades of society into one miserable heap of ruins. Our two worthy brothers, preachers at Padiham, cannot, with full work, earn 3s. each a week, and they are only a sample of a large class. The small tradesmen are insolvent, and the great bulk of the people can scarcely procure the bare necessaries of life. Where piety has already taken possession of the heart, it may possibly retain its hold, but how can it spread in this frigid zone? How can a preacher with a salary of 3s. a week preach from 'Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed'?"

In view of facts like these, it is not surprising that many working men, despairing of remedial legislative action, looked with favour upon the employment of force. To a careful observer [1] the signs were ominous of the prevalent mood of the people of Padiham. "Here teeth were set, hands were clenched, and curses of fearful bitterness pronounced with harrowing energy." "There was a reckless desperation about the aspect of misery in Padiham which was unlike anything I ever saw in Lancashire. I heard a man in the open streets, amidst

[1] W. Cooke Taylor. *A Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire*, p. 89.

the cheers of some scores, express an eager hope that 'Captain Swing would take command of the manufacturing districts.'" The Padiham Chartists, we learn, had a banner with the motto, "Sell thy garment and buy a sword," a saying which points to the Scriptural source of much of the doctrine of the Chartists here and elsewhere. The influence of the Bible in the fugitive literary productions of the Chartists has been traced by Dierlamm alike in their form and content.

The hardships of the hand-loom weavers and the distress in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire frequently led to riots and to the breaking of power-looms. There were riots in Rochdale in 1829, and power-looms were broken in Rossendale in 1826 and 1832. A glimpse of these proceedings is afforded in the report from the Rawtenstall society to the Methodist Unitarian Association, 27th May 1831, when the congregation was said "to have suffered a check owing to the unpleasant misunderstanding in the neighbourhood between the operatives and their employers, in which the innocent suffered with the guilty, and had been compelled to seek employment in other parts of the country."

John Fielden, James Taylor and other prominent Methodist Unitarians belonged to that section of the Chartist Movement which disapproved of physical force as a means of gaining their end. In 1832 Fielden founded the Society for Social Regeneration, which started an agitation for factory reform. He was also a leader in the Anti-Poor Law cause. It was the avowed intention of the Poor Law Commissioners of 1834 to make the workhouses as like prisons as possible, and non-partisan men, like the Rev. Wm. Carus Wilson, spoke of the "wanton cruelty of the officers of the new Poor Laws." "By his own exertions Fielden prevented the introduction of the Act of 1834, or of the Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths' Act of 1837, which was closely connected with it, into the Todmorden area at all. It was a good generation later before the pressure

from Whitehall compelled the Todmorden Union to build a workhouse." [1] "The leaders of the Movement drew their inspiration from the Bible, from a belief that the Act was a violation of Christian principles." [2] The reference to the Scriptures as a final court of appeal is quite in line with the practice of the Methodist Unitarians, who in theology rejected as inconsistent with Biblical teaching the dogmas of councils and the hermeneutics of ecclesiastics.

In correspondence with an Oldham constituent (23rd November 1845) Fielden counselled "an appeal to the reason rather than to the passions," adding, "to do nothing is the only way to succeed in your opposition." He even declared himself ready to provide cottage homes for the poor, to save his native town from having a "bastille" erected in its midst. When in 1838 the attempt was made to carry out the Poor Law Act in Todmorden by an execution upon William Ingham, overseer for Langfield, the officers of the law were severely handled by a mob. At a subsequent meeting of ratepayers to protest against the Poor Law Act the chairman was James Fielden, and one of the two chief speakers was Joshua Fielden, the son of John Fielden, and a member of the Methodist Unitarian chapel. Amongst the local men prominent in the Chartist Movement were Robert Brooke, a lame schoolmaster indicted at Lancaster Assize for "a memorable speech" at a Chartist demonstration in the town, Enoch Horsfield, Samuel Whitham, Thomas Barker, Richard Barker, Joseph Stansfield and James Stansfield. Of these men at least four, including Brooke, had some connection with the Methodist Unitarian chapel.

In Parliament John Fielden was courageous and unremitting in his efforts in behalf of the popular cause. He first appeared in the Parliament of 1833 as seconder of an Amendment to the Address moved by Cobbett. He also seconded his Oldham colleague's resolution to remove

[1] Hovell. *The Chartist Movement*, p. 87. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

Peel from the Privy Council, which was so offensive to the members that it was expunged from the journals of the Commons by resolution of the House.

The character of Fielden's parliamentary efforts in behalf of the distressed workers of Lancashire may be estimated from his speech in the House of Commons on Thomas Attwood's motion, 21st March 1833, for an "Enquiry into the cause of the distress of the country": "The noble lord, the Chancellor of the Exchequer . . . admits that there is very serious distress amongst the hand-loom weavers, and says it is caused by competition with the power-loom, and cannot be removed. . . . Are my poor distressed hand-loom weavers to rest satisfied with being told that they are suffering severe distress, which cannot be removed because they have to compete with the power-loom? If I thought power-looms were the cause of the distress (I and my partners have nearly a thousand of them), and if it can be shown that they cause the distress, I should like to see them broken to pieces to-morrow. But this is not the cause, for anything calculated as machinery is to facilitate and increase production is a blessing to any people, if the things produced be properly distributed, and it is the duty of the Legislature to cause such a distribution to be made; and if I were of opinion that the relief could not be effected by the Legislature, I would take my hat and walk away, and never come within the walls of St Stephen's again. The labouring people are in deep distress, there is a cause for it, and if the King's servants cannot find a remedy for it, they are not fit to fill the benches they occupy in this house. . . . My training has been at the spinning jenny and the loom, and not at the college and the courts, and I think I am entitled to the indulgence of the House. . . . Is there no remedy to be found for the distress in this reformed House of Commons? Will you not enquire into the cause of the sufferings of the people? They have expected great benefits would result from a Reformed Parliament. . . . They have for

two or three years waited patiently for this Reform, and if the expectations be not fulfilled, if they find that justice is denied to them, I tremble for the consequence."

Of Fielden as a speaker a contemporary said: "He was wont to excite the risibilities of honourable members in the House. He used to hold his hat drum-ways in one hand, and, with the other, as he gave utterance to a proposition or stated a fact, he rammed home the charge by a violent knock into his hat, which not infrequently had the most ludicrous effect. He had no remarkable fluency of speech, nor any striking style. His language was generally what would be called 'commonplace,' and his sentiments were sometimes rather unmusical in expression. His voice was somewhat thin, although upon the whole tolerably audible. But Fielden, though he did not possess either a purely logical bent of intellect, or any of the powers of declamation, was a speaker upon whom you could always rely for truthful information, and some practical sense by which you could be guided." [1]

Fielden's firmness of will and the persistency with which he pursued his purposes led one of his opponents to dub him "the self-acting mule," an allusion to the automatic mule patented by Roberts in 1825 and introduced later into the spinning mill.

John Fielden was returned as member for Oldham in the elections of 1835, 1837 and 1841. In 1835 he was appointed a member of the Commission to consider the condition of the hand-loom weavers. In a private letter to a constituent he describes the committee as "a fair one," which "will sanction any proposition for redress of the weavers' grievances that can be shown to be practicable," and adds: "I shall do my utmost to devise practicable measures of relief." He was the first witness called, and in his evidence depicted the lot of the hand-loom weavers who, "notwithstanding their want of food, clothing, furniture, and bedding, have full employment," not infrequently working "sixteen hours a

[1] Evans. *Lancashire Authors and Orators*, pp. 90-91.

day." On 23rd July, probably at Fielden's suggestion, John Ashworth, the Methodist Unitarian minister of Newchurch, was summoned to London to give evidence before the Commission. He was examined on 28th July. Ashworth is described as a woollen manufacturer, and it is stated that he was well acquainted with the weavers personally. He gave particulars of actual cases of hardship that had come under his observation, and appears to have impressed the Commission favourably with his accurate and intimate knowledge of the distressed operatives. The chief causes of distress were found to be due to (1) power-looms; (2) war taxation; (3) contraction of the currency; (4) exportation of yarn; (5) low wages, causing longer hours of work; (6) Corn Laws; (7) competition; (8) lack of combination. Various remedies were suggested: (1) taxation of steam-looms; (2) limitation of their hours of running; (3) local Boards, with equal numbers of masters and men to fix wages; (4) suggested by John Fielden only "that the average of the best prices paid in a district by a majority of the firms doing half of the trade be the minimum wage." Little or nothing was done to carry the recommendations into effect.

John Fielden next became conspicuous in the movement to pass into law the Ten Hours Bill. In 1836, replying to the master spinners and manufacturers of Oldham, who desired his support of the petition to the Government praying that persons under twenty-one years of age might be employed for sixty-nine hours a week, he advocated "eight hours per day in factories as being long enough for either children or adults," and shortly afterwards published *The Curse of the Factory System.*

On 25th September 1838 he took the chair at a monster meeting of the Chartists held at Kersal Moor, Manchester, in favour of the Chartist programme. It was the first great demonstration organised by the Manchester Political Union, which had "proclaimed its abhorrence

of violent language and physical force," though the gathering "was graced by the presence of Stephens, O'Connor and other advocates of violent courses." [1] At this meeting James Taylor, the Methodist Unitarian minister, was elected delegate to the National Convention (1838-1839) as the representative of Rochdale. Gammage in his *History of the Chartist Movement* speaks of the "influence which Mr Fielden's presence had given to the meeting," and pays a fine tribute to his character, concluding with the words: "The sun has seldom shone over a better man than John Fielden."

The second largest Chartist demonstration (after the meeting on Kersal Moor) was held on Peep Green, between Leeds and Huddersfield, when O'Connor, O'Brien, James Taylor and Mills were amongst the speakers. Mills and Taylor were also announced to speak at a similar gathering at Sheffield, but were unavoidably absent.

Fielden was one of the two M.P.'s (the other was Thomas Attwood) who were deputed to present to the House of Commons the great petition containing 1,200,000 signatures. "Attwood and Fielden had demanded that the Convention should pass a resolution condemning violent language and physical force. This produced an excited debate in the Convention, and the resolution was not passed."

After the rejection of the petition in the House by 225 to 46, the Convention, then sitting at Birmingham, considered the advisability of declaring a General Strike. Against this James Taylor strongly protested. "The formal result was the appointment of a committee to take the sense of the people upon the question; the real result was the suicide of the Convention and the temporary collapse of the whole movement." [2] But though he did not countenance such exploits as the Newport Rising, under John Frost (4th November 1839), in which

[1] Hovell. *The Chartist Movement*, p. 118.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 168.

the Chartists were put to flight, " leaving fourteen dead and some fifty wounded," Taylor exerted himself in behalf of its leaders. At a Convention next year, whilst opposing violent measures to secure the release of Frost and his two companions, who had been sentenced to transportation for life, he warmly advocated the drawing up of a petition in their favour. The petition, though very largely signed, did not achieve its object, and it was not until 1854 that Frost obtained an unconditional pardon.

Four days after Frost's abortive rising James Taylor addressed a torchlight meeting at Oldham. The speakers included Feargus O'Connor, Stephens and Deegan, the well-known Chartist leaders. At this meeting James Mills was elected " the representative of the borough of Oldham in the National Convention."

Mills had taken part (26th June 1838), the Coronation Day of Queen Victoria, in an Anti-Poor Law demonstration at Oldham, and was a staunch supporter of John Fielden. His connection with Chartist meetings elsewhere has already been mentioned. Like the Todmorden Methodist Unitarian, he disapproved of physical force methods, and left the Convention when it came under the influence of the extremists. Later (5th April 1842) he became a member of the Complete Suffrage Conference, which met at Birmingham. This was an attempt to unite the middle-class Free Traders and the Radicals amongst the workers. Its author was Joseph Sturge, a Birmingham Quaker, " whose pietist ways " appealed strongly to the Christian Chartists. It was a rival movement to that led by O'Connor, but met with no legislative success.

Mills appeared to have been one of the Methodist followers of Stephens, who, for a little over five years, rented the Lord Street Chapel, and probably left the society on account of the violent tendencies of its leader. His name occurs in a list of subscribers to the Lord Street Chapel, April, 1840, when the effort was made which

resulted in the reopening of the chapel for Unitarian services, and again in a later list of members. He may have taken services occasionally in the chapel, for the followers of Stephen and for the Methodist Unitarians, and is described by Hovell, rather inaccurately, as a Unitarian minister of Oldham.

In July, 1840, delegates met in Manchester to revive the Chartist Movement, which had suffered severely by the Frost rising. Taylor was one of three present who had been members of the Convention of 1838-1839, and when the Chartist petition was presented to the House of Commons in 1842 by Thomas S. Duncombe, Fielden supported the motion that the petitioners be heard at the bar of the House.

On 29th April John Fielden moved the second reading of the Ten Hours Bill, when it was rejected by a majority of ten.

The repeated failures of the Chartists to secure redress of their grievances by parliamentary action led to further outbreaks of rioting and lawlessness. On Friday, 12th August 1842, strikers from various surrounding towns invaded Todmorden in numbers so great that it was said that the procession took twenty minutes to pass a given point. The Bacup contingent, all able-bodied men, were armed with thick hedge sticks and crowbars. Their first visit was to the mill of Fielden Brothers. Here no resistance was offered, and one of the partners gave them money in relief of their distress. At this time the firm was actually paying a higher rate of wages than that for which the strikers were out. Hence to the offer of the authorities to send soldiers for the protection of his property, John Fielden proudly replied that he could do without it—" the arms of the people were his protection, and when that ceased he hoped he would cease to live."

On 10th February 1847 John Fielden again moved the second reading of the Ten Hours Bill, when it was carried and soon afterwards became law. At the General Election of 1847 he was rejected at Oldham

and did not attempt to re-enter the House. He died at Skegness on 29th May 1849, and was buried at the Unitarian chapel, Todmorden.

The publications of Fielden, besides the pamphlet on the Factory System already named, include the following:—(1) *The Mischiefs and Iniquities of Paper Money*, 1832, with a preface by Cobbett; (2) *National Regeneration*, 1834; (3) *A Selection of Facts and Arguments in Favour of the Ten Hours Bill*, 1845; (4) *Important Speech on the Sugar Duties*, 9th May 1841.

In April, 1875, a bronze statue of Fielden was erected in Todmorden, the cost of which (£1000) was defrayed by public subscription from the factory operatives of the country.

Besides being actively engaged in the Chartist and other kindred movements of the first half of last century, the Methodist Unitarians numbered in their ranks some of the earliest advocates of co-operation in England. Holyoake in his *Story of Co-operation in Rochdale* traces the connection of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers with an unsuccessful strike of flannel weavers towards the end of 1843. The society was registered on 24th October 1844, with a membership of forty and a stock worth £14 to £15 in the old premises at Toad Lane. The twenty-eight original members of the society were artisans, flannel weavers, cloggers, wool-sorters and the like. Holyoake mentions the religious opinions of two only—namely, Swedenborgian—and one of these is described as "nothing in politics." It was the political views of the pioneers Holyoake was interested in, and these in many cases he states. Six were Chartists, and eight Socialists, social reformers or Owenites.

According to W. Robertson,[1] many of the earliest members of the society "worshipped at Clover Street Unitarian Chapel, which, in the course of a short time, went by the name of the 'Co-op Chapel.'" Holyoake, in conversation with a former minister of the chapel, said

[1] *Rochdale the Birthplace of Modern Co-operation*, p. 53.

that at least half of the "original twenty-eight" were associated with it. One was James Wilkinson, the Methodist Unitarian "cobbler parson." Amongst others was James Smithies, one of the first directors, described by Holyoake as "in some respects the greatest of them all," whose "measureless merriment" "kept co-operation in good countenance in evil days," and "laughed the society into existence."

Of Methodist Unitarians who served the society from the first in various capacities were James Manock, John Collier, a great-grandson of "Tom Bobbin," the dialect writer, Miles Ashworth and Thomas Ashworth. The families of these men are still represented in the Rochdale Unitarian school and church. Another of the "twenty-eight" connected with the chapel until his death was John Hill. Perhaps the most influential member of the society in its earliest days was Charles Howarth, one of the first Trustees, who drew up the rules of the institution, coined its title and was responsible for the vital principle that profits were to be divided on purchases in proportion to each member's trade with the society. He was a disciple of Robert Owen, took a prominent part in the agitation for the Ten Hours Factory Act and was sent to London to confer with various M.P.'s when the Bill was before the House of Commons. He assisted in forming the North of England Co-operative Wholesale Society, of which he was one of the first directors, and up to the time of his death was a director of the Co-operative Insurance Society. His friend, William Cooper, described him as "a free-thinker in religion." He appears to have been loosely connected with Unitarianism, for he was buried (30th June 1868) at Heywood by the Rev. John Fox, the first Unitarian minister in that town, and his brother Samuel, formerly of Rochdale, became a member of the Heywood Unitarian church.

The presence of religious heretics as leaders in the new society must be presumed from the observation of Holy-

oake that " by 1850 the rapid increase of members had brought together members holding evangelical views, who had not been reared in a school of practical toleration. They proposed to close the reading-room on Sundays and forbid religious controversy." " The matter was brought before the General Meeting, 4th February 1850," [1] and the cause of toleration triumphed.

From the establishment of the society in 1844 until his death in 1858 James Wilkinson, the Methodist Unitarian minister, acted as one of the arbitrators for the society. Though he had little work to do in that capacity, as disputes amongst the members were almost unknown, the appointment is a tribute to the judicial reputation which he enjoyed amongst his fellow-co-operators.

The early co-operative movement in Rochdale was never in any sense sectarian, but the large part played by Methodist Unitarians in its formation and in its management during the critical period of its infancy deserves honourable mention.

The mass of the Methodist Unitarians, like the rest of their class in Lancashire and elsewhere, were more or less inarticulate, but the outspoken Radicalism of their leaders is an evidence of their general social and political ideals. Many Chartists and social reformers, as already stated, were associated with the various Methodist Unitarian chapels, and in 1847 John Ashworth reported that in the previous year a young man, who had thought and read much, and was formerly prominent in the Owenite Movement, had become an acceptable preacher in their midst."

It cannot have been without its effect on the followers of Joseph Cooke that whilst engaged in the Chartist Movement James Taylor was preaching regularly in their chapels, that James Wilkinson, the pioneer co-operator, was another of their ministers, and that John Fielden was not only, in virtue of his personal character

[1] *Story of Co-operation in Rochdale,* pp. 19-20.

and public position, the most influential member in the circuit, but also from 1828 onwards the owner of the chapel at Todmorden.

It is safe to say, then, that in Rochdale, Oldham, Rossendale, Todmorden and Padiham there were no more steady and convinced supporters of reform, social and political, than the members of the Methodist Unitarian Association.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anon. *Memoir of Benjamin Goodier.* 1818.

Ashworth (John). *Ten Letters, giving an Account of the Rise and Progress of the Unitarian Doctrine at Rochdale, Newchurch-in-Rossendale, and Other Places formerly in connection with the late Joseph Cooke.* 1817.

Ashworth (T. E.). *The Todmorden Poor Law Riots and Plug Plot.* Todmorden. 1901.

—— *A Todmorden Worthy.* Todmorden. 1901.

Aspland (R. Brook). *Memoir of Robert Aspland.* London. 1850.

Beard (J. R.). *The Religion of Jesus Christ Defended from the Assaults of Owenism.* London. 1839.

Carpenter (R. L.). *Memoir of the Life and Work of P. P. Carpenter.* London. 1880.

Chapman (S. J.). *The Lancashire Cotton Industry.* Manchester University Press. 1904.

Christian Pioneer, The. Ed. George Harris. Glasgow. 1827-1845.

Christian Reflector, The. Ed. F. B. Wright. Liverpool. 1825-1833.

Christian Reformer, The. 1st Ser., 1805-1833; 2nd Ser., 1834-1858.

Christian Teacher, The. 1825-1844.

Claridge (W.) and Evans (W.). *J. Hirst Hollowell and the Education Movement.* Manchester. 1911.

Collection of Hymns for Public Worship, A. Ed. Benjamin Williams. Salisbury. 1778.

Colligan (J. Hay). *Eighteenth Century Nonconformity.* London. 1915.

Cooke (Joseph). *Address on Liberality of Sentiment and Practice.* Rochdale. *n.d.*

—— *The Hasty Sentence Arrested.* Rochdale. 1807.

—— *Methodism Condemned.* Rochdale. 1807.

—— *On Justification by Faith and the Witness of the Spirit.* Two Sermons. Rochdale. 1806.

—— *Selection of Hymns Principally Collected and Corrected.* Rochdale. 1813.

—— *A Sunday Evening's Companion.* Rochdale. 1810.

Dictionary of Hymnology, A. Ed. John Julian. London. 1892.

Dictionary of National Biography. Ed. by Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee. London. 1885-1912.

Dierlamm (Gotthilf). "Die Flugschriftenliteratur der Chartistenbewegung," etc., in *Münchener Beiträge zur romanischen und Englischen Philologie.* Leipzig. 1909.

Eayrs, Townsend and Workman. *History of Methodism.* 2 vols. London. 1909.
Evans (George Eyre). *Record of the Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire.* Manchester. 1896.
—— *Vestiges of Protestant Dissent.* Liverpool. 1897.
Evans (John). *Lancashire Authors and Orators.* London. 1850.

Faulkner (H. U.). "Chartism and the Churches," in *Columbia University Studies in History,* lxxiii., No. 3. New York. 1916.
Fielden (John). *The Curse of the Factory System.* Halifax. 1836.

Gammage (R. G.). *History of the Chartist Movement.* London. 1854.
Gordon (Alexander). *Heads of English Unitarian History.* London. 1895.

Hare (Edward). *Genuine Methodism Acquitted.* Rochdale. 1807.
—— *Remarks on Mr Cooke's Two Sermons.* Rochdale. 1807.
—— *The Sentence Confirmed.* Rochdale. 1807.
Harris (George). *Lectures on Deism and Atheism.* London. 1823.
Herford (Brooke). *Eutychus and his Relations.* London. 1905.
—— *Travers Madge—A Memoir.* London. 1868.
Herford (R. Travers) and Evans (E. D. P.). *Historical Sketch of the North and East Lancashire Unitarian Mission.* Bury. 1909.
Holden (Joshua). *A Short History of Todmorden.* Manchester University Press. 1912.
Holmes (J. Haynes). *Life of Robert Collyer.* 2 vols. New York. 1918.
Holyoake (G. J.). *Thirty-Three Years of Co-operation in Rochdale.* 2 parts. Rochdale. 1844-1877. London. 1878.
Hovell (Mark). *The Chartist Movement.* Manchester University Press. 1918.

Inquirer, The. London. 1842-1857.

Jenkins (J. E.) *History of Unitarianism in Padiham.* Accrington. 1906.
Jessop (William). *An Account of Methodism in Rossendale.* Manchester. 1880.

Lancashire and Cheshire Unitarian Missionary Society Annual Reports. 1823-1830.

Manchester Domestic Mission, The. Annual Reports. 1834-1838.
Manchester Statistical Society. Report of the Committee. 1834-1835.
Manchester Socinian Controversy, The. Ed. Rd. Slate. (MS. notes by Geo. Hadfield.) London. 1825.
Manchester Unitarian Village Missionary Society. Annual Reports. 1831-1854.
Marcroft (A.). *Historical Account of the Unitarian Chapel, Oldham.* Oldham. 1913.
—— *Landmarks of Local Liberalism.* Oldham. 1913.
Methodist Magazine, The. 1796-1812.
Minutes of the Todmorden Political Union. Transcribed by James Whitehead. 1907.
Monthly Repository, The. 1806-1834.
Moore (B.). *History of Wesleyan Methodism in Burnley and East Lancashire.* Burnley. 1899.

Newbigging (Thomas). *History of the Forest of Rossendale.* London. 1868.
Nicholson (Francis) and Axon (Ernest). *The Older Nonconformity in Kendal.* Kendal. 1915.

Overton (J. H.). *Life of John Wesley.* London. 1891.
Overton (J. H.) and Relton (Frederick). *A History of the English Church.* Vol. vii. London. 1906.

Parry (A. J.). *History of Cloughfold Baptist Chapel.* 1876.
Proceedings in the House of Lords. Lady Hewley Case. 1839.
Psalms and Hymns for Divine Worship. Ed. Michael Pope. London. 1760.
Psalms and Hymns originally intended for Protestant Dissenters in Birmingham. Ed. Wm. Hawkes and Joseph Priestley. Birmingham. 1790.
Psalms and Hymns, A Collection of. Ed. George Walker. Warrington. 1788.
Psalms, A New Collection of. Ed. John Breckell and Wm. Enfield. Liverpool. 1764, 1798, 1806.

Report of Select Committee on Hand-Loom Weavers. London. 1835.
Report from Select Committee of House of Commons on the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis. 1816.
Robertson (W.). *Life and Times of Rt. Hon. John Bright.* Rochdale. 1877.
—— *Old and New Rochdale.* Rochdale. 1881.
—— *Rochdale, the Birthplace of Modern Co-operation.* Manchester. 1892.

Selection of Psalms and Hymns for Social and Private Worship, A. Ed. Lant Carpenter. Exeter. 1812.

Selection of Psalms for Social Worship, A. Ed. Newcome Cappe. York. 1786.
Shaw (J. A.). *Bethlehem Unitarian Chapel, Newchurch. Historical Sketch.* Newchurch. 1906.
Spedding (T. P.). *The Monthly Messenger.* Rochdale. 1888.

Taylor (J. J.). *A Retrospect of the Religious Life of England.* Introduction by Jas. Martineau. London. 1876.
Taylor (W. Cooke). *Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire.* London. 1842.
Thomas (Jenkyn). *Rawtenstall Unitarian Chapel. Historical Sketch.* Rawtenstall. 1903.
Trevelyan (G. M.). *Life of John Bright.* London. 1913.
Turner (William). *Sermon and Appendix.* Newcastle. 1786.

Wesley (John). *Diary of John Wesley.* 5 vols. London. 1797.
Wright (Richard). *A Review of the Missionary Life and Labours of Richard Wright, written by Himself.* London. 1824.

Manuscripts

John Ashworth's Account Book. 1808-1850.
Fielden (John). *Letters.* Oldham Public Library.
Whitaker (Richard). *Register Book.* 1766.
Registers of Baptisms.
Trust Deeds.
Minutes and Correspondence, etc.

INDEX

PROPER NAMES

(*a*) Persons

Allard, William, 39, 45, 109
Allt, William, 56
Ashworth, Edmund, 74
Ashworth, George, 118, 120
Ashworth, James, 33, 41
Ashworth, John, 2, 4, 6, 15, 17, 18, 19, 22, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 48, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 85, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 95, 96, 97, 99, 104, 105, 109, 110, 113, 114, 126, 132, 138
Ashworth, Miles, 137
Ashworth, Richard, 104
Ashworth, Thomas, 137
Aspland, Robert, 39, 42, 46, 47, 51
Astley, Richard, 38, 39, 60
Attwood, Thomas, 130, 133

Barbauld, Anna Letitia, Mrs, 26
Barker, Joseph, 115
Barker, Richard, 129
Barker, Thomas, 129
Barker, Thomas, 93
Barnes, Thomas, 29
Bayley, Thomas B., 103
Beard, John Relly, 68, 70, 89, 125, 126
Beattie, John, 38, 39
Beethoven, 77
Bell, Andrew, 100
Benson, Joseph, 8, 14
Biddle, John, 16
Bowman, James, 32, 33, 34, 37
Bowring, Sir John, 78
Bradford, Joseph, 2, 5
Bright, John, 35, 123
Brooke, Robert, 129
Brooks, James, 46
Brougham, Henry Lord, 101
Browe, W., 44, 117
Buckland, George, 53
Bunting, Jabez, 104

Cappe, Newcome, 26, 27
Carpenter, Philip Pearsall, 78, 79, 98
Carpenter, Russel Lant, 78
Channing, William Ellery, 70
Chantrey, Francis Legatt, 49
Clarke, Adam, 8, 13
Clarke, Henry, 62, 68, 69, 105
Clayton, Thomas, 57
Clegg, James, 19
Clegg, John, 35
Cobbett, William, 122, 123, 129
Coke, Thomas, 8, 22
Collier, John, 137
Collyer, Robert, 96, 97, 116
Cook, James, 109
Cooke, Joseph, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36, 37, 38, 42, 47, 52, 53, 59, 60, 81, 82, 83, 84, 89, 91, 97, 99, 104, 112, 138

Cooke, Martha, 4
Cooper, William, 137
Crawshaw, John, 33
Cree, Robert, 62
Cropper, John, 82

Dawson, William, 67
Dean, W., 33
Deegan, 134
Dierlamm, Gotthilf, 124, 128
Driver, James, 33, 35, 41, 44, 59
Duncombe, Thomas S., 135

Eayrs, George, 5
Elliott, Gilbert W., 29, 39, 51, 60, 61, 109
Enfield, William, 30
Entwistle, John, 122, 123

Fenton, John, 122, 123
Fielden, John, 59, 60, 64, 66, 67, 93, 106, 107, 108, 115, 117, 119, 121, 122, 125, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138
Fielden, Joshua, 116
Fielden, Joshua, 129
Finch, Rev. Mr, 31
Finch, Mrs, 28
Fletcher, John, 10, 13, 15, 18
Fox, John, 137
Fox, William Johnson, 63
Frost, John, 133, 134, 135

Gammage, R. G., 133
Gaskell, William, 69, 82
Gee, John, 117
Goodier, Benjamin, 42, 45, 46, 47, 76, 93
Goodier, John, 46
Gordon, Alexander, 51, 56
Greenwood, W., 93
Gregory, A. E., 10
Grey, Earl, 120
Griffiths, D., 69
Grime, J., 44, 87
Grindrod, Ann, 60
Grundy, Edmund, 43, 44
Grundy, John, 41, 42, 62, 66

Handel, 77
Harbottle, Rev. Mr, 69
Hare, Edward, 9, 15
Hargreaves, J., 96
Harries, Edward, 66
Harris, George, 62, 63, 64, 68, 82, 85, 86, 110
Harrison, Mr, 105
Hawkes, William, 27
Haydn, 77, 78
Heape, Robert, 33
Herford, Brooke, 77, 95, 96
Hetherington, Henry, 124
Hewley, Sarah (Lady), 39, 40, 47, 73, 79
Hill, John, 137
Hopkinson, Elijah Whitaker, 58
Hopkinson, John, 58
Holyoake, George Jacob, 136, 137, 138
Horsfield, Enoch, 129
Horsfield, Frederic, 53, 61
Hovell, Mark, 135
Howarth, Benjamin, 33, 35, 41
Howarth, Charles, 137
Howarth, Samuel, 137
Howorth, Franklin, 4
Hoyle, James, 33
Hoyle, John, 33, 41
Hoyle, Richard, 97, 98
Hudson, R., 44
Hughes, Mary, 66
Hummel, 78
Hunt, Henry, 123, 124
Hunt, Leigh, 119
Hunter, James, 63

Ingham, John, 54, 55, 57, 58
Ingham, Mary, 57
Ingham, William, 129

Jervis, Thomas, 26, 27
Jessop, William, 54, 55

Jones, David, 46
Jones, Noah, 66
Jortin, John, 16, 83

Kay, James, 43, 45, 61
Kay-Shuttleworth, James, 70
Kelsall, Robert, 123
Kilham, Alexander, 3
King, Jane, 106
King, Mary, 106
Kippis, Andrew, 26, 27

Lamb, Charles, 18
Lancaster, Joseph, 100
Lindsey, Theophilus, 27, 67, 103
Livsey, Thomas, 124
Lomax, J., 41
Lovett, William, 123

M'Allum, Duncan, 13
Macaulay, Lord, 102
M'Keand, Mrs, 106
Madge, Travers, 76, 77, 79, 104
Manock, James, 137
Martineau, James, 16, 82
Mendelssohn, 77
Mills, James, 125, 133, 134
Mills, John, 33
Moore, Henry, 8
Morgan, Thomas, 27
Mozart, 78

Newbigging, Thomas, 77
Newton, Sir Isaac, 25
Newton, Joseph, 117
Norman, Harriett, 116

O'Brien, James Bronterre, 133
O'Connor, Feargus, 124, 133, 134
Overton, J. H., 8
Owen, Robert, 124, 126, 137

Parry, A. J., 55
Pawson, John, 8
Peel, J., 44
Peel, Sir Robert, 130
Philipps, Nathaniel, 64
Piccop, Joseph, 56
Pilling, James, 17, 19
Pollard, James, 33, 34, 36, 41, 43, 44, 63, 71, 74, 79, 80, 81, 91, 96, 127
Pope, Michael, 39
Priestley, Joseph, 1, 27, 28, 29, 115

Ragland, John, 85
Raikes, Robert, 103
Rawdon, Christopher, 86
Rees, Abraham, 27
Robertson, William, 136
Robinson, John, 33, 34, 36, 41, 43, 44, 62, 63, 71, 74, 79, 80, 81, 91, 96, 127
Robinson, W., 33
Rudman, Jonathan, 20, 33, 34, 41, 43, 44, 68, 87, 92

Scott, John, 34
Slate, Richard, 48, 54, 57
Smithies, James, 137
Solly, Henry, 115
Spedding, Thomas Perkins, 49
Stackhouse, Thomas, 18
Stansfield, Ashton, 93
Stansfield, James, 129
Stansfield, Joseph, 129
Stephens, Joseph Rayner, 48, 133, 134, 135
Stevens, William, 60, 64, 65
Stewart, Thomas, 67, 109
Sturge, Joseph, 134
Suthers, James, 118

Tayler, John James, 69
Taylor, Edmund, 74
Taylor, James, 18, 31, 33, 34, 41, 42, 43, 44, 62, 63, 64, 65, 68, 71, 74, 81, 82, 85, 90, 92, 96, 97, 99, 109, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 128, 133, 134, 135, 138

Taylor, James (Rivington), 85
Taylor, Thomas, 9, 13
Taylor, W. Cooke, 113, 114
Thomas, Jenkyn, 56, 57
Thomas, Thomas, 93, 119, 120
Thomson, John, 20, 39, 40, 49, 96
Threlkeld, Thomas, 29
Tuckerman, Joseph, 69
Turner, William, 103
Tyerman, Luke, 56

Walker, George, 30
Wardlaw, Ralph, 93, 94
Watts, Isaac, 27
Waugh, Edwin, 22, 77
Wesley, Charles, 8
Wesley, John, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 23, 30, 36, 55, 83, 91, 103, 114
Whitaker, George, 54, 56
Whitaker, Margaret, 57
Whitaker, Richard, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58
Whitby, Daniel, 22
White, George, 68, 117, 119, 125
Whitefield, George, 56
Whitehead, Mrs Eli, 80
Whitham, Samuel, 129
Wicksteed, Charles, 76
Wilkinson, James, 31, 33, 34, 40, 41, 43, 44, 47, 48, 64, 68, 74, 81, 82, 91, 92, 96, 97, 137, 138
Wilkinson, J., 44
Wilkinson, Mary, 29
Williams, Benjamin, 27
Wilson, George, 117
Wilson, W. Carus, 128
Wood, George William, 79
Wright, Richard, 30, 39, 45, 51, 52, 53, 55, 58, 59, 60, 89, 92, 93, 96

Yates, James, 93, 94

(*b*) Places

Ashton-under-Lyne, 48

Bacup, 7, 91, 135
Bantry Bay, 5
Barnoldswick, 95
Bingley, 103
Birmingham, 4, 133, 134
Blackburn, 89
Blubberhouses, 116
Bolton, 110
Bostock, 39
Brecon, 5
Bristol, 66
Burnley, 113
Burslem, 4
Bury, 39, 41, 71, 109

Catshole, 45
Catterick, 103
Chester, 5
Chicago, 97
Chowbent, 64, 69
Cirencester, 61
Cloughfold, 74
Colne, 96
Crawshawbooth, 59, 91

Downham, 68, 91
Dudley, 2, 28

Eastwood, 86
Edinburgh, 39
Elland, 39
Exeter, 30

Failsworth, 46

Glasgow, 85
Gloucester, 103

Hackney, 42
Halifax, 39, 41, 96

Hanwood, 66
Haslingden, 18, 42, 91, 92
Heap, 44, 45
Heath, 28
Heywood, 137
Higham, 76, 91
Hinckley, 56
Hindley, 85
Hope, 103
Huddersfield, 133
Hyde, 46

Kendal, 39

Lancaster, 101
Langfield, 129
Leeds, 13, 16, 69, 133
Littleborough, 33, 35, 59, 72
Liverpool, 69, 86
London, 3, 137
Lyme Regis, 31

Madras, 100
Manchester, 2, 5, 8, 12, 13, 29, 59, 62, 70, 72, 79, 101, 103, 132, 135
Merthyr Tydvil, 5
Middlesex, 101
Middleton, 64
Montauban, 47
Moss-side, 45

Newcastle, 12, 13, 103
Newchurch (in Rossendale), 2, 4, 7, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 29, 32, 33, 34, 37, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 52, 57, 61, 64, 66, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 104, 109, 132
Newchurch (in Pendle), 91
Newport (Mon.), 133
Newport (I. of W.), 64
New York, 97
Nore, 5
Northumberland (Pennsylvania), 45
Norwich, 116

Oldham, 2, 47, 59, 64, 91, 98, 104, 106, 117, 121, 129, 132, 134, 135, 139

Padiham, 19, 42, 45, 53, 61, 63, 64, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 74, 75, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 86, 88, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 98, 104, 105, 125, 126, 127, 128, 139
Penzance, 4
Preston, 62

Rawtenstall, 2, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 68, 70, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 82, 83, 85, 87, 90, 91, 96, 98, 104, 128
Redruth, 2
Rimmington, 91
Rochdale, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 20, 24, 28, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 41, 43, 44, 47, 51, 52, 59, 68, 74, 82, 84, 85, 88, 91, 92, 94, 96, 98, 103, 104, 121, 124, 125, 128, 136, 137, 138, 139
Rossendale, 17, 19, 20, 23, 29, 35, 38, 42, 47, 49, 59, 75, 77, 113, 125, 128, 139
Rotherham, 44

Salford, 89
St Austell, 4
Salisbury, 26
Sheffield, 6, 8, 10, 17, 64
Skegness, 136
Southwark, 100
Stand, 79, 82, 98
Sunderland, 9, 11

Todmorden, 2, 59, 60, 64, 66, 67, 72, 73, 74, 79, 81, 82, 85, 86, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 98, 99, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 117, 121, 123, 125, 128, 129, 134, 135, 136, 139

Wakefield, 94
Wanington, 30
Wardle, 34
Wheatley Lane, 91
Wigan, 45
Wrexham, 29
York, 27, 78

(*c*) Chapels

Bacup, Baptist Chapel, 56
Burnley, Unitarian Chapel, 53
Bury, Silver Street Chapel, 43, 45

Cloughfold, Baptist Chapel, 55, 56, 57

Eastwood, Myrtle Grove Independent Chapel, 86
Elland, Christ Church, 38, 39

Failsworth, Dob Lane Chapel, 46

Halifax, Northgate End Chapel, 38, 49
Heywood, Unitarian Church, 137
Hindley, Presbyterian Chapel, 45

Kendal, New Street Independent Chapel, 44

Liverpool, Renshaw Street Chapel, 85
London, Queen Street Methodist Chapel, 3

Manchester, Cross Street Chapel, 41, 103
Newcastle, Hanover Square Chapel, 103
Newchurch, Methodist Chapel, 18, 19
Newchurch, Bethlehem Chapel, 19, 22, 38, 39, 40, 42, 68, 75, 94, 110
Northumberland (Pennsylvania), Unitarian Church, 45

Oldham, Lord Street Chapel, 39, 42, 46, 134

Padiham, Methodist Chapel, 106
Padiham, Nazareth Chapel, 62, 63, 70, 76, 94

Rawtenstall, Old Chapel, 56
Rochdale, Blackwater Street Chapel, 28, 29, 37, 38, 49, 51, 109
Rochdale, Clover Street Chapel, 46, 49, 51, 52, 60, 81, 86, 123, 136
Rochdale, Providence Chapel, 16, 17, 22, 30, 31, 32, 33, 37, 84, 94
Rochdale, Union Street Methodist Chapel, 5, 16, 17

Todmorden, Methodist Chapel, 106
Todmorden, Unitarian Meeting House, 64, 65, 136, 139

(*d*) Meeting Rooms

Bagslate, 33, 35
Broadley, 33, 34, 35
Broad o'th Lane, 33, 34, 41
Buersill, 34, 41
Burnley, 2, 18, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 52, 53, 69, 91, 92, 96
Bury, 43, 44, 45

Chatburn, 91
Church Lane, 33, 34
Crompton, 33

Fivehouses, 33, 34

Kitbooth, 34, 41, 43, 97

Lanehead, 33, 34, 35, 36, 41, 44, 103, 104
Lowerplace, 33, 34, 35, 36, 41, 43, 44, 52

Meanwood, 33, 35, 52, 104

Nacks, 34, 41, 43, 97
Newchurch (Mill End), 18, 19

Oldham, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48

Padiham, 2, 18, 33, 36, 40, 41, 43, 44, 53, 62

Rochdale (Drake Street), 38, 49

Smallbridge, 33, 35

Todmorden, 18, 52, 61
Top of Toad Lane, 33, 34

Whitworth, 33, 35, 36, 41, 43, 44

THE RIVERSIDE PRESS LIMITED, EDINBURGH

Date Due

[illegible]			
JAN [illegible]			
JUN [illegible]3			
[illegible] 1984			
[illegible]			

BX9836 .M16
The Methodist Unitarian Movement.
Princeton Theological Seminary–Speer Library
1 1012 00043 5893